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IS IT TO BE A STRUGGLE IN INDIA?

A FEW months ago, when Indians and Englishmen both believed that an early invasion of India was imminent, we came nearer to a settlement than we have ever been before or since. After Sir Stafford Cripps visited Delhi, the political outlook deteriorated as the military danger grew less urgent. We do not know why the Japanese postponed their attack. They may only be waiting till the rains are over, or until they have consolidated their extensive conquests; or, it may be, until one of the German offensives attains its objective. To assume that India is now immune from invasion would be the height of folly. The reasons which made us eager to bring the Indian people wholeheartedly into the war are, therefore, as imperative to-day as they were in April. The chance of doing this since the Working Committee of Congress adopted its new statement of policy has become very slender. The new fact is that Congress has made its claim for India's independence not merely in a form which Britain cannot accept, but in a form which it cannot have believed would be accepted. This would seem to mean that it is bent, in the midst of the war, on a trial of strength. It is impossible, for two reasons, for the Government to accept its demand. It suggests a surrender of power in India before any interim Government has been constituted, which could take over. Apparently we are to trust to luck, in the hope that when our backs are turned, Indians will be able to do what they have not managed to do while we held the reins at Delhi. Secondly, we are to do this without any understanding that an independent India would offer military resistance to the Japanese. The resolution does, indeed, use the word "resistance." Some Congressmen, notably Dr. Azad and Mr. Nehru, are prepared to fight with arms, while Mr. Gandhi relies on prayer and fasting. Dr. Azad has predicted that a free India would raise a national army by conscription, while Mr. Gandhi declares that its first act would be to disband the army. So long as this divided party takes refuge in this ambiguity, it is difficult even to discuss an agreement with it. With a united India resolute to defend its soil with arms we could reach an understanding and ought at any cost to our pride to do so. But none of us would agree to walk out, leaving India riven not merely by the old communal feuds, but also by the new division between the pacifist older generation and the younger men who are prepared to fight. We view our own recent record in India with so little satisfaction that we are loth to criticise Indians. But we cannot refrain from recording the impression which the tactics of Congress under Mr. Gandhi's leadership make upon us. It seems to find negation, protest, and resistance for ever congenial, but it shrinks from the risks of power and responsibility. If we have lacked the gifts of generosity and imagination which this crisis demanded, it has lacked political courage and the positive genius which creates and constructs.

We have now to face the immediate future. Congress has backed its far from plausible "appeal" by a threat of civil disobedience, which it must carry out, if its national committee should sanction it next month. We do not profess to know what measures Mr. Gandhi will attempt. Last year he qualified his "non-violent non-co-operation" by the condition of "non-embarrassment." The Western mind is apt to lose its way amid this ascetic's negatives. He may again contemplate little more than a gesture, which would result, as he may reckon, in the imprisonment of the leaders of the movement, including himself. If he attempts much more than a relatively harmless gesture, we believe that he will find the response of the masses disappointing. There are strong forces against him, from the Muslim League to the Communists, and Congress itself is divided. The economic motive which enlisted the peasants behind him in 1930 now tells the other way. The slump had then caused a catastrophic fall in the prices of their crops: to-day these prices are rising. Formidable as his movement was then, it never touched the strategic keys of power, the army or the railways, nor did it result in a withdrawal of services from Europeans. It is unlikely that it would have much effect on the industries working for defence. On this view of the probabilities, it would be rather a moral than a physical embarrassment. We do not dispute that it may have ugly political consequences. It will accentuate the divisions which are the curse of Indian society. It will make it very much harder to rally Indians for the defence of their country. It may even tempt the Japanese to hasten their attack. It will impair our moral prestige among Americans and Chinese and on the Continent of Europe. Critical though we may be of Mr. Gandhi as a tactician, he retains the veneration of countless millions in Asia and the respect of multitudes elsewhere. On this reading of the prospect, while he can do us some harm by passive rebellion, we should injure ourselves much more gravely by active repression. Millions of Indians who felt some doubt about his methods would tend to rally to him once he were our prisoner. If he chose to fast against us, we should have to release him. If, on the other hand, we ignore his probably ineffectual gestures of rebellion, the chances are that they will result in nothing worse than a diminishing demonstration of discontent. So long as we are responsible for the defence of India, there doubtless are some kinds of protest which we could not ignore and should have to repress. But a wise government will be very slow to draw this line. As a martyr in a British prison, Mr. Gandhi would endanger the defence of India very much more gravely than he can do while he remains at liberty in his hermitage at Wardha. The arrest of Dr. Azad and Mr. Nehru, who wish to join us in the military struggle against the Axis, would be a step so paradoxical that common sense revolts against it. We trust Mr. Amery to go to the utmost limits of patience and tolerance, before he opens an era of coercion which might have consequences from which both he and Mr. Gandhi would recoil, if they could read the dark and perilous future.

Is there still no way out? There has come from the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in Chungking a suggestion which may reflect the views of the Chinese Government. It is hardly less involved in the problem of India's defence than we are ourselves. The negotiations in Delhi served only to reveal the deep distrust with which too many Indians regard Downing Street. The suggestion is that the United Nations should jointly guarantee our pledge to recognise India as a Dominion immediately after the war, with a right of secession which would give her full independence, if she chose to claim it. We should also offer help for her economic development after the war. In return she should pledge herself now to full co-operation in the war effort. If the joint guarantee of America, China and Russia would avail to banish Indian mistrust, we ought to welcome it, and, indeed, to seek it. What happens in India, now and hereafter, is as properly their concern as it is ours. If we hesitate to concede this, then Indians would be justified in suspecting that we still think of their country as a part of our imperial estate. No feelings of proprietorial dignity ought to stand in the way of accepting any help we can get in this matter from our allies. The difficulty is, however, that the Cripps mission broke down rather over the interim arrangements than over the eventual solution. Indians distrust us because we are unwilling, as they see it, to hand over to them the reality of power to-day. Would they be less critical of the interim plan, if they had an international guarantee for the future? That is possible: this avenue of hope should certainly be explored. In retrospect it is easy to suggest ways in which the Cripps offer could have been improved. It was far too rigid; it was never open to substantial amendment. The refusal of the Viceroy to say in advance that he would treat his Council as "by convention" a Cabinet was unfortunate and unnecessary. He might well have given an undertaking similar to that which overcame the reluctance of Congress to take office in the provinces. Again, the transfer of Indian affairs in the interim period either to the Dominions Office or the Foreign Office would have meant much to hesitating Indians. If there is to be a new era, a new Viceroy should inaugurate it. Finally, it was doubtful whether we meant to trust this nation with arms. To say all this may be useless to-day. The only point in saying it is to remind outselves that the offer Sir Stafford Cripps carried to Delhi was not above reasonable criticism. If, with Chinese or American aid, a new way towards a reconciliation can be found, it would be unpardonable to refuse it. History may criticise Mr. Gandhi, should it come to a struggle, but the heavier responsibility will fall on us.

Vichy and the Churches

Marshal Pétain, there is no doubt, identifies his regime with Catholicism, considering his slogan of *travail, famille, patrie*, as a Christian aspiration in contrast to the anti-clerical associations of "liberty, equality and fraternity." One of his decrees removes the obstacles to the formation of new religious congregations in France; and a great deal of propaganda has identified the German victory with a penitential and purifying trial sent by God to the nation. The relations of Vichy with the Church, however, are not so simple as that. It is true that a small part of the hierarchy, led by the late Cardinal Baudrillard, have been led by their horror of Bolshevism to adopt a collaborationist attitude. But other bishops have outspokenly taken the opposite view, while in the main the official episcopal policy, voiced by Cardinal Suhard, the Archbishop of Paris, is to take its stand "in the religious sphere only, outside all political parties." The parish priests, on the contrary, have been the backbone of resistance, in Brittany and Savoy, particularly; Admiral Darlan once stormed at the priests of Dauphiné that he understood Hitler's attitude to the clergy. The Protestant Federation has accepted the Pope's Peace Points of 1941 as the Christian point of view, citing their adoption by the British church leaders. As to the people, not all the Catholic Right is collaborationist; after all, patriotism is a strong motive in the army caste which is its main element. The Catholic Left is openly *Gaullist*, and co-operates with the Socialists in resistance. Its paper, the *Nouveau Temps*, was suppressed; it now publishes pamphlets, the *Cahiers du Témoignage Chrétien*, which print the banned Papal encyclical against Nazism, the Vatican broadcasts, and opposition to the anti-Semite decrees. These are said to have a very wide circulation. What with the abhorrence in which the devout hold Laval, it would seem as though one of the main props of the Vichy regime is likely to prove unreliable.

Work of the League

The Annual Report by the Secretary-General of the League of Nations is tiny compared with the massive pre-war document. Its appearance reminds us, however, of the continued existence of the League and of its latent reserves of value. The knowledge upon which plans for post-war reconstruction must be based was mainly centralised at the League before the war; knowledge for instance of the movements of trade, of the relative standards of nutrition in different countries. The parts of the League Secretariat which still remain at Geneva—the Health section in particular—has the experience necessary to organise medical relief after the war. The economic and financial sections, which are at Princeton University, are conducting demographic research work. The importance of the ebb and flow of populations cannot be over-estimated; next to the uncontrolled fluctuations between booms and slumps, the population pressure of the last generation against frontiers closed by nationalist policy has probably contributed most to the misery of the peoples and to pretexts for war. Mr. Loveday, the head of the economic section of the League, is acting Secretary-General. He inherited the tradition created by Sir Arthur Salter, who tried to stem the pre-war flood of economic nationalism. Perhaps the nations have learned their lesson this time: and if they do attempt to realise and control social forces such as population movements they may use the League organs adapted to post-war conditions.

Production

Last week's production debate was altogether a curious affair. It is natural enough that ministers should put the best face on the affairs of their departments; but Mr. Lyttelton and the others who spoke on behalf of the Government were surely altogether too full of self-congratulation. It is no doubt true that from the standpoint of quantity our arms factories have of late been doing a considerably better job than they were, though even in this respect there is nothing to congratulate ourselves on in the sphere of merchant shipbuilding. The outstanding question now is whether we are making the right things, and whether our design is not being allowed to lag behind our improved factory organisation. Despite all the official spokesmen had to say, there is still serious doubt about our tanks, and a good deal of evidence that not nearly enough attention is being given to heavy armoured cars; and it is questionable whether, in matters of design and control of specifications, we have yet succeeded in getting the right people at the top. The weakest spot now in the organisation of war industry is at the points at which the vital decisions are taken about what is to be produced. It is perfectly true that changes in design involve a sacrifice in immediate output; for re-tooling is a time-taking business, even if it is speeded up as much as it can be. But the more apparent it becomes that we are in for a long war, the more vital is it that we shall not allow ourselves to rest content with inferior weapons merely because they can be produced more quickly. Simplification of design is indispensable, in order to make changes more rapidly than would otherwise be possible, as well as for the purpose of increasing the pace of production. We have the long run to reckon with; and in the long run the best weapons give the best chance of victory. The Battle of Britain was won largely by the quality of our planes—the result of years of preparation. In most land weapons we have no similar background of successful pre-war practice, and, the more we have to learn, the more we need men of imagination at the head, not only of the design departments, but also of the bodies which have the effective judgment on the designer's projects, and settle what is actually to be made.

We are nevertheless disposed to give Mr. Lyttelton credit for having set considerable improvements on foot already, and for meaning to do what he can to improve the qualitative selection, as well as the quantity, of what is to be produced. He is evidently trying both to introduce something of the scientific spirit into the War Office and to use the new Joint War Production Staff as an instrument for getting a better strategic planning of weapon-power between the services. Nor have his efforts stopped short at the sacred portals of the Admiralty, despite the Government's failure to give him adequate authority for dealing with this branch of war production. The development of "Combined Operations" is as important on the production front as it is in the sphere of military collaboration between the fighting services and has as great a bearing on the prospects of land-war on the European Continent. Nor can it be doubted that Mr. Lyttelton and Mr. Nelson between them have brought about a great improvement in Anglo-American co-operation in their sphere of action. Indeed, collaboration between the two countries is a good deal further advanced in this respect than in most others.

A Universal Minimum Wage

Mr. Bevin has been talking about a universal minimum wage, which is to become part of our post-war system of social security. We cordially agree with him; for the plans that are being put forward for improved social services cannot be made to work unless they are accompanied by an assured basic standard for those at work as well as for the sick and the unemployed. But we should like to know whether the proposal implies a *general* basic wage at less than which nobody may be employed in any industry or occupation, or whether we are to have something more like a universal extension of the Trade Board system, with separate minimum rates fixed for each industry, or even for each grade of labour within each industry. Or is there perhaps to be a combination of the two—a system of trade minimum wages, together with an overriding minimum for everybody? Again, will there be separate minimum rates for men and women, or will the principle of "equal pay" be applied? The divergence between men's and women's average earnings is still so great that different rates are likely to be unavoidable; but this need not hinder Trade Boards from fixing uniform rates for trades where men and women work side by side.

Fuel-rationing

The householders are getting their fuel forms to fill up, despite the protests of the 1922 Committee; and presumably it will take the much abused legion of clerks just as long to sort out and deal with the forms for a scheme that is *not* being brought in as for one that is. The opponents of rationing are, from their own peculiar standpoint, quite right in abusing the Government for sending out the forms; for it can hardly be supposed that it would have sent them out unless it had expected to be forced to introduce before long an actual rationing scheme. The scheme, when it comes, will probably not be that which Sir William Beveridge so carefully proposed, but something a good deal less spartan and, one may assume, a good deal less effective.

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if it's waste paper!

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IN THE BALANCE

Mr. Lyttelton has told us that the next eighty days may be decisive for the whole course of the war. He was referring, of course, mainly to the Russian stand against the terrific drive towards the bend of the Don and Stalingrad on the Volga. The week's news, though much of it is difficult to interpret, is decidedly more cheerful from the north of this vast theatre of operations, but it is as grave as ever in its picture of the southern battlefield. In the complicated struggle round Voronezh the Russians have regained the initiative. The significance of this place is not so much that it is a considerable town with a busy industrial population, as that it bars the way to the Moscow-Stalingrad railway. If the Germans could hold it securely as their bridge-head across the Upper Don, they would then strike north, some fifty miles, towards Yelets, where they would cut this vital route for the supply of the eventual centre of Russian resistance at Stalingrad. It is possible that the Germans did reach the suburbs of Voronezh and may still hold a position there. But their main force has been driven back from the city to the river-bank: all but one of their bridges have been recaptured and the Russians are operating on the right bank of the river.

In the Donets basin the army which had been driving due east has now swung south and west, and an encircling movement may be in progress. The Germans may hope to envelop part of the Russian rearguard, which hitherto has been so skilfully handled that few prisoners have been taken. The immediate objective is Rostov, upon which three columns are converging, from Taganrog to the west of it, from Voroshilovgrad and Kamensk to the north of it, and probably also in a sweep from the north-east. It is not easy to judge whether there is any truth in the German claim that they have already crossed the Don to the east of Rostov. This city has a big engineering industry and served as a centre for the distribution of oil by rail and river. An attack from the air may also have begun. It is believed that the Germans are assembling barges in the Crimea for a crossing to the coast of the Caucasus.

Two opinions prevail as to the purpose of this German offensive. Is it primarily to deny to the Russians access to the oil of the Caucasus, and at the same time to occupy the Donets coalfield and a rich grain-growing district? In that case, they will fling their main strength at the bend of the Don, which they must cross if they hope to capture Stalingrad and block the Volga highway. Others believe that they need the Caucasus oil for their own use. In that case they will strike south from Rostov and soon involve themselves in very difficult country. They may conceivably try to accomplish both these purposes. On the "denial" theory, the peril to the Russians is sufficiently grave, since their agriculture as well as their army has been mechanised and depends on oil. But we may feel confident that Timoshenko is preparing a stubborn defence of the bend of the Don and the approaches to the Volga. Here, twenty years ago, the Civil War was decided in the Red Army's favour.

On our own battle-front in Egypt everything is in the balance with Auchinleck now, apparently, taking the initiative with an attack in force. Our Air Force maintains its ascendancy and has inflicted considerable losses on the enemy's forward air-fields. The local successes won in small-scale encounters were encouraging. The total of prisoners taken round El Alamein reached 6,000, most of them Italians. The Navy has been preying on Rommel's supplies by sea. But it must be assumed that he has received reinforcements. This front, important as it is, cannot be decisive in the critical eighty-day struggle of which Mr. Lyttelton spoke. If we are to throw in our weight it must be on the Continent of Europe and before autumn is over. To rely on Timoshenko's ability to hold the Germans unaided is to take a heavy risk. If he were cut off from his main supplies of oil, it is doubtful whether next year an Anglo-American army could face the German forces liberated from his front.

"YOUTH"

Very nearly the most depressing of all the social documents of recent years have been those which have set out to describe the situation of adolescents and young adults in the depressed areas or, indeed, in any areas in which poverty is common. These accounts of things as they were presented a picture of boys and girls, but especially boys, flung out of blind alley employments at 17 or 18, or left, by the decay of the industries in which they would have been absorbed, to kick their heels in useless penury through the most formative years of their lives. It was pointed out again and again that only a tiny fraction of these adolescents were even touched by any sort of club or society, and that when they grew up to be young men and women a still tinier portion of them took any interest at all in politics or public affairs, or knew the first thing about such matters. Everyone agreed that we were pitifully and wickedly misusing a commodity—youth—which was growing scarcer and therefore more precious as the average age of the population rose. Everyone agreed that something ought to be done about it; but nothing was done, right through those dreary decades of misgovernment between the two wars.

Then came war, bringing new problems with it and doing away with some of the old ones. Juvenile unemployment gradually disappeared as labour of all sorts grew scarce, and we ceased to worry about blind-alley occupations in a world in which no one knew up what alleys most occupations were likely to lead. But in place of the old evils came new ones—among them an alarming increase in juvenile dilinquency, due partly to educational upsets and evacuations, partly to a relaxation of parental control, and partly, well, just to the toughness which war encourages. In place of juvenile unemployment came the problem of juvenile overwork, where young workers were forced to share the long hours of labour demanded of their elders, and the restrictions on the working hours of young persons recently imposed under the Factory Acts were removed in many thousands of cases under the plea of war necessity. With these abnormal hours of labour —up to sixty or even seventy a week—came fresh demands on youth's leisure time. Hundreds of thousands of adolescents joined the pre-military training units, and many others enrolled in the Home Guard, often giving wrong ages in order to secure admission. Such calls, on top of a heavy day of factory labour, must in many cases be imposing very severe strains on juvenile endurance—not the less so because the strain is often voluntarily accepted.

While all this was going on, the Government was waking up to a sense that the needs of youth had been neglected; and throughout the country the local authorities, under stimulus from the centre, were undertaking youth activities and collaborating with the voluntary youth movements on an unprecedented scale. The nature of these activities and the energy with which they have been pursued differ a good deal from area to area; but in most places great difficulties are being encountered because of the long working hours and the increased pace of work which has to be sustained. It is true that, by way of compensation, juvenile earnings have risen sharply, especially in the case of boys, and a fair number of the older boys have found themselves upgraded to men's work at adult wages. But this, where the work is heavy, as among the builders' labourers, is by no means a good thing; and the evil is aggravated because, under war conditions, the grown-ups can seldom spare time to teach the young worker how to do his job. Apprenticeship is suffering seriously on this account, above all in the building trades; and boys who ought to be learning to be craftsmen are kept at labouring work instead.

Technical education is also suffering, as much of the space of technical schools and colleges is taken up with special forms of war training, and a good deal of the normal work of adolescent education is thrust aside. The conditions in this sphere were bad enough before the war. The numbers of full-time technical students were small in most trades, and the great majority of those in attendance were trying to pick up the training they needed by attendance at evening courses after a full day's work. A few employers gave time off for day attendance; but the great majority did not. Consequently, of those who began upon technical evening courses with a view to winning certificates the majority fell by the wayside, and only a small minority went through to the end. War has inevitably worsened these conditions, which were bad enough before.

As against this jeremiad, it may be argued that conditions of military service have changed very much for the better. Many thousands of men in the Air Force, and not a few in the technical units of the Army and Navy, are picking up a valuable training in the handling of tools and the understanding of machines. There is no risk that, at the end of the war, we shall suffer from a shortage of men equipped with the elements of machine-sense and dexterity in the less difficult engineering occupations. It may be that, for those who find their way into the more skilled branches of the armed forces, the training there given will undo the mischiefs of earlier neglect. It may even be that serious overwork for a few years is not quite so disastrous for the adolescents as we supposed it was when the Factory Act of 1937 was passed.

But the position is bad enough, and it is not easy to find a remedy while the war lasts. One thing that clearly ought to be done is a much more stringent enforcement of the regular law about the hours of labour of those under 18. It is more than doubtful whether hours as prolonged as those now being worked in many factories are really a source of higher production. The experience of the last war is against long hours; and it might not be at all a bad thing if the result of refusal to sanction excessive hours for juveniles were a reduction in the amount of overtime worked by some of the adults. But, quite apart from that, the hours of the juveniles ought to be shortened—the more so if they are to be expected to take an active part in other forms of national service out of working time. Leisure, up to a point, is not a luxury, but a necessity, above all for the young. Our great-grandfathers no doubt thought differently, and sometimes tried to justify working children for twelve and fourteen hours a day by the plea that there was no other way of keeping them out of mischief. But that argument can hardly come to life again in the twentieth century.

We can, then, do something now to improve the situation, though not a great deal. The less we can accomplish now, the more determined should we be to put matters really right after the war. The raising of the school-leaving age to sixteen, and the prohibition of all "gainful employment" below that age, are highly desirable things; but it is even more important that the boy or girl shall not be allowed to leave school and lose all necessary contact with education on entering industry, whatever the leaving age may be. The institution of part-time education up to eighteen is at least as important as the extension of the period of full-time education beyond fifteen, and may be even more urgent. For it means not only an educational bridge between childhood and manhood, but also a fundamental change in the condition of juvenile employment.

Of course, this is true only if the right methods are used in the new schools. It would be possible to start a system of continuation schools in which youth would be merely bored, and not prepared for the activities of adult work and leisure. What is needed in this period of part-school, part-factory life is neither mainly trade education for a particular craft nor mainly book-learning of a narrowly "cultural" kind, but a training of hand and mind together that will make the adolescents who pass through it more adaptable and intelligent producers, more skilled consumers of goods and services, and better citizens of the community. They must be free to follow their several bents, cultural or practical—to master the scientific ground work of their several occupations, rather than the technique of a particular trade; to become handier in using their own language in speech or writing; to know more about their own country, and about other countries and peoples; and therewith to use their bodies better, as well as their minds. Their education must be designed, for as many of them as possible, not to end at eighteen, but to implant in them the desire for more, and to lead them in to one or another of the varied forms of adult education, including higher technical education, that ought thereafter to be put within their reach.

This is one side of the problem which we have to face now, if we are to be ready to put the necessary reforms into operation speedily on the return of peace. But the problem has also another side. Most persons in authority seem to expect that conscription in some form will survive the war, and that we must look forward to having for many years to come a great Army and Air Force under arms. If this is to be our fate, it is to be presumed that the boys (and perhaps the girls also) will, on leaving their part-time schools, or not long afterwards, be called up for their quota of national service. If so, it will be our bounden duty to see that the time they spend in this service is not wasted from the human standpoint. The only condition on which compulsory service can be tolerable in the post-war world is that the Army and the Air Force and the Navy shall become truly educational institutions, training their conscripts not merely as cannon fodder, but for the business of living. Army education, above all, will need to be utterly transformed, and the entire spirit of army discipline will need to be altered beyond recognition.

No doubt, some of our readers will be wroth with us for mentioning such possibilities as the conscription of young men and maidens in a world rid of Nazi domination. But is it not best to face the unpleasant possibility, rather than allow it to take us unprepared? For assuredly, if we are not ready for it, we shall be in grave danger of getting it in the worst possible form. A year's national service, rightly organised, much more on the lines of Mr. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps than on those of existing military training, might be an excellent thing for the group known as "18 +": it could be at any rate very much better than the demoralising conditions which a large proportion of those in this age group were condemned to experience up to 1939. And it would be most likely to be worked in the right way if it were directly linked up with a system of part-time (preferably half-time) education up to eighteen, including a period of school-camping leading on to the period of part-military, part-educational national service.

These things want thinking about, much harder than most educational reformers have thought about them so far. We do not profess to have the complete answer to the conundrum, but clearly the answer needs to be sought and found now, and not left until the war is over and everything has to be improvised in a hurry, probably by just the people who ought to have least to do with it.

A BELFAST VISIT

I HAPPENED to begin my short stay in Belfast (on what was to all intents and purposes my first visit to Ireland—I had spent a tourist week in County Mayo many years previously) at a time of crisis in the city's domestic affairs. There had been a scandal about a sanatorium under the control of the Corporation, and the Lord Mayor and certain other Councillors were suing the Editor of *The Northern Whig*, an Independent Unionist paper, for damages for libel, to the tune of £50,000, for describing certain of their proceedings as "an act of bare-faced jobbery." Judgment on this case had not yet been given in the Ulster High Court when I had to return to England. Meanwhile, however, the Northern Ireland Government had introduced a Bill in effect providing for the transfer of all the powers of the Belfast Corporation in financial matters to certain Administrators to be appointed by the Government. The Corporation in consequence, no doubt for the first time in its history, had formed a "united front" of all parties to oppose this Bill, and a good deal of agitation was going on against depriving the citizens of Belfast of their democratic rights, and so on. The citizens themselves, however, did not seem to be particularly concerned at this alleged threat to their rights, and a public meeting of protest in the Grosvenor Hall was sparsely attended.

I tried to find out whether this crisis in the affairs of the Belfast Corporation derived specially from the condition of affairs in Great Britain generally, and it seemed to be agreed that this was not the case, and that it was, in fact, only the usual kind of local government scandal one is familiar enough with in England and Scotland (much the same sort of thing has happened recently in Glasgow). Belfast, however, occupies such a dominant place in relation to Northern Ireland that such a scandal must inevitably damage the structure of the whole little State.

The commanding issue in Northern Ireland politics, about which everyone one meets is only too anxious to express their view, is the border question. As an Englishman visiting Ireland for the first time I think I arrived with an open enough mind, but I must admit at once that by the end of my short visit I found the Nationalist case on this burning issue hard to understand.

My difficulty in understanding the Nationalist case was this; whilst, I suppose like most Englishmen to-day, I admit that the record of our rule in Ireland is by and large a shameful one, and whilst I fully understood (or thought I did) the passionate sentiment in favour of the unity and freedom of the whole country from British rule, I simply could not get a clear answer to the question, how this was in practice peacefully to be brought about. For, as Cromwell once said, if one may quote him in an Irish context without immediately being accused of partisanship: "Vote it as you please: a company of poor fellows will spend their blood sooner than see it settled so," and that remark seems exactly relevant to the Irish problem to-day. Undoubtedly the majority of Ulstermen whatever be the scientific facts (which are, of course, hard to come by) as to their racial origins, would fight sooner than be governed from Dublin—sooner even than derive devolution from Dublin instead of from London. I did not find a Nationalist prepared to deny this.

The nearest I could get to an answer to my question was the statement, which naturally caused me some concern, that the responsibility for solving the problem was not, as I had previously assumed, an Irish, but a British one. I was told that its solution was in fact perfectly simple, namely, that if the British Government withdrew its financial support the Northern Ireland Government could not continue to exist. This would no doubt be the result. But it does not seem to me to settle the argument. It may be admitted that the British Government has, historically, no good reason for being in Ireland at all. Still in point of fact it is involved, and it surely has (as in India) a moral responsibility to do all it can to avoid bloodshed? More than one Nationalist with whom I spoke gave "Yes" as an answer to this question, but that only left me more than ever before feeling that Irish Nationalists were not squarely facing the difficulties in their path.

All this being so I could not help feeling that while there may indeed be a boundary problem capable of eventual solution (why should Fermanagh and Tyrone with their large Catholic majorities be linked to the four Counties with their large Protestant majorities?) no proposal for complete Irish unity seemed feasible as a political measure within any foreseeable length of time. It was hard indeed in Belfast to understand why De Valera harps so constantly on this one remaining grievance; every time he opens his mouth on the subject of partition the ranks of the North are knit closer together. The Unionist case is all the stronger because in recent years Ulster has, after all, only been consistently asking to be left alone. She did not want even the measure of devolution granted by the 1920 Act, though having got it she has on the whole made a success of devolution considered purely as a constitutional experiment. It must, moreover, be borne in mind that, even if, by some miracle, religious bigotry on both sides was to disappear, De Valera's policy to Britain has increased, if that be possible, the opposition of the North to union with the South. Ulstermen attach the greatest possible importance to their connection with Britain. "Dominion status" might conceivably have been acceptable to them; "external association" definitely is not.

I felt, in short, after talking with political leaders on both sides that Irish unity could only be built, very gradually, from the ground upwards, and this led me to make certain inquiries about the educational system in Ulster. I gathered that for the most part Catholic and Protestant children went to quite separate elementary schools and, further, that whilst Protestants might accept a proposal that all children should go to the same schools—save for being separated during those hours of the day devoted to doctrinal instruction—such a proposal would never under any circumstances be accepted by Catholics. This unbending attitude of the Catholic Church in the matter of education seems an important factor in perpetuating sectarian bitterness.

On the other side of the question the Catholic minority in the North has definite grievances. The Special Powers Act has no doubt in practice been used only against a tiny handful of the population, but the discretionary powers it gives to the Government are terrifyingly large; constituencies have undoubtedly been gerrymandered in the Unionist interest; and in the giving of private employment at any rate employers discriminate in favour of members of their own religion. There is plenty of work for all at the moment, of course, but since the majority of employers are Protestant this may well cause serious hardship to Catholics after the war. It is perhaps only fair to add that Unionists argue that this last grievance works in reverse on the other side of the border, and that the Eire Government has on its statute book coercive powers just as great, if not greater, than those possessed by the Government of Northern Ireland.

It was natural for a correspondent for this journal to inquire what hope there was of this weary old feud between Unionists and Nationalists being cut across by the rise of a powerful Labour Party. Under the energetic leadership of Harry Midgeley, a Belfast Alderman and the victor in the recent Willowfield by-election, the Labour Party is undoubtedly growing in strength. Two Nationalist Councillors in Belfast have recently joined its ranks on the ground apparently that, given the existing condition of things, the Nationalist programme in Ulster is a bankrupt one. The numbers of the Communists are also on the increase. But while both Labour and Communism in Belfast may say that for them the border question is an utterly secondary issue, that since the border is in fact there the thing to do is to get on with the job of building up the Labour Movement, and, at this moment of course, winning the war, it seems true that the bulk of Labour support is derived from the Protestant and not from the Catholic working class. Alderman Midgeley apparently found this out to his cost by supporting the Spanish Government during the Civil War! In short it seems likely that Northern Irish Labour is Unionist at heart, and would find itself driven into an openly Labour-Unionist position if ever it came to a "showdown." Meanwhile, it unfortunately seems to be the case that the Irish problem is not likely to be solved by the rise of a third party.

F. H.

THIRTY YEARS OF PANEL DOCTORING

Towards the end of 1906, after nine enjoyable and enjoyed years of medical practice in extreme West Cornwall, fearful of falling into ruts, however pleasant, I went to medical agents, and on their recommendation bought a small practice in Stepney. The slum life of cities was something of which I had had but little experience. I had a look at the premises, which were sordid enough, with many broken windows mended with bits of cardboard, and looking generally shabby. I was well away from the ruts here, and without further investigation, I came to a decision. I thought that it would be interesting to see the effect of the application of paint, distemper, and new windows to the premises; and of providing the patients—regardless of fees—with medical amenities at least equal to those enjoyed by my late patients in Cornwall and by the middle classes everywhere. I explained that I wanted no "introduction" from the outgoing practitioners—there were two of them—but that I would take over on any day and at any time, when it suited them to remove their belongings and free themselves of responsibilities. I well remember the first evening surgery, which began an hour before the van containing my incoming furniture arrived. With the help of some inverted sugar-boxes lent by a neighbouring grocer, we made a start without an appreciable hitch. Luck was on my side, and a good impression was made. Within twenty-four hours, things—at any rate, so far as waiting room, consulting room and dispensary were concerned—were in apple-pie order. Walls were distempered, curtains were up, a few bright pictures relieved the bareness of the walls, comfortable chairs were at the patients' disposal, and there was an air of established order. This is not a chapter from an autobiography, so I will not go into further details of what to others may seem irrelevant to our subject. Suffice it to say that my practice rapidly grew, as also did my interest in it. I had to make a living for myself and my family; but beyond that, money-making entered very little into my mind. Patients were numerous, and work continuous day and night—I practically never spent a whole night in bed; though I could but realise the impossibility of continuing for any length of time to work as I was then doing.

Then, in 1912, the whole problem of working-class medical treatment was fundamentally changed by the coming into force of the National Health Insurance Act, with its most striking novelty, the so-called Panel System. I am here speaking only of the medical provisions of the Act.

I soon realised the new possibilities placed within my reach. As I have said, the number of my patients was enormous; and all the adults among them who were engaged in work of any kind automatically became insured patients, for each of whom, well or ill, the State guaranteed the payment of a fixed annual sum, the total amount paid in districts like mine being very many times that hitherto yielded by the private payments of such of these individuals as fell ill. Instead of working single-handed with the occasional help of a deputy over the week-end, I was able to take into partnership four highly qualified men and women, to engage a couple of nurses who were also certified midwives—during each of the three or four years preceding the passing of the Act, I had myself attended more than five hundred women in childbirth, in addition to my other work—to secure the co-operation of a dental surgeon and a masseur, and adequate secretarial help. I was able to enlarge my premises fivefold, as was indeed necessary. In other words, the efficiency of the practice was very much increased, and the panel list of myself and my partners was, I suppose, among the longest in the country.

The panel system has materially raised the standard of medical treatment in poor areas, and it has drawn to those districts hundreds of competent young practitioners who, in the old days, would never have thought of facing the discomforts involved for the small fees then obtainable.

When, in 1911, the State Insurance Bill was first introduced, it was greeted in the House of Commons and in newspapers of every colour with enthusiasm and eulogy. At that stage of its development I felt very critical, for the Bill differed much from the Act which was passed in the following year. In an article in the *Nineteenth Century* I wrote that this enthusiasm "is gratifying enough as showing the amount of goodwill which is abroad. As a sign of the sort of political thinking which is current, however, the uncritical reception of the proposal may well alarm us. The absurd over-statement of the effects of such a measure, the hopeless mental confusion as to the problem which it is supposed to attack, the general inability to distinguish between constructive or preventive legislation and palliative measures, such as this glorified system of out-relief, is very disturbing to those of us who are concerned with the welfare of England and of her people. . . Still, if the Bill is wisely amended, it may yet, within modest limits, be an instrument for good; and most of its possible evils may be avoided.

"The medical service under the Bill, as it will probably be amended, may be made to combine most of the advantages of an official public health service with those of private practice, without the disadvantages of either. Under the new scheme it is almost certain that every patient will be free to select his own doctor, so that a medical man who is habitually inattentive, discourteous, or inefficient will not attract any large number of clients. It will be to a doctor's interest to give to each patient all the skill, courtesy and attention he can command. On the other hand, it will be to his advantage to get his patient well and off his hands as quickly as possible, since a long attendance will mean no increase of payment for himself. Every medical man will naturally in his own interest become a keen sanitarian. It will be to his interest actively to spread the truth about the personal and public care of health. Thus, as a by-product, the present Bill—although itself but a kind of buying off of the Danes—may lead in the course of time to such an education of the public in matters of hygiene that real legislation and administration directed to the prevention of disease will be demanded."

As I pointed out in *The Nation* twenty years ago, and have many times reiterated, if all doctors were able, conscientious and industrious, loving their work and caring for their patients year in and year out, regardless of the effects on their financial position, a salaried State Medical Service would be as near the ideal as any system we could devise.

But doctors of experience and the working people themselves know only too well how fancy a picture this is. They know quite well that doctors are not equally skilful or equally attentive to their duties, and that much of the work of a general practitioner is sheer drudgery such as few men would continue to perform unless their living depended on it. It is all very well for the specialist or the man engaged in research, or the expert surgeon to show a fine disregard for monetary reward. Their work is interesting and dignified, and the eyes of their profession and of the world are upon them. A very large part of the work of a general practitioner, on the other hand, is stale, monotonous, thankless, humiliating, and carried out in the darkness of slum tenements and in the surgeries of back streets. Only his patients are in any degree acquainted with it; it is they alone who are competent to mete out applause to him and to allot to him his reward. A working man is quite right to maintain his claim to choose his own doctor; and if he is to receive a good service, his doctor must be remunerated on the same principle as that which determines the remuneration of those who doctor the rich—namely, in proportion to the number of those whose confidence he inspires.

What, then, are the main shortcomings of the medical provision of the Insurance Act as it now stands? All manual workers and all non-manual workers earning not more than £420 a year, from the age of fourteen upwards, are now compulsorily insured. Were their families included, the uninsured remainder would be relatively small in number; though I should like to see the entire population brought within the scheme. It would make for better doctoring all round. But that, I suppose, is a bit too Utopian.

All medical services, not merely those of a general practitioner, fundamentally important though these are, should be at the disposal of everyone in proportion to need. The panel doctor should act as friend and adviser in directing his patients to the specialist or special institution he considers necessary. I am not much worried about the committees responsible for the working of the Act, though I doubt if Approved Societies and Insurance Committees are the best bodies that could be chosen. They have, however, proved less inadequate than I at one time feared they would. The patient's freedom of choice of doctor must be preserved. The problem was, and, in a slightly lesser degree, still is, how best to divert to the poorer quarters of our cities a reasonable proportion of the more able and ambitious doctors who tend to congregate with unnecessary density in the residentially attractive quarters inhabited by people in a position to pay good fees. A system had to be evolved whereby it would be made at least as profitable to doctor the poor as to doctor the rich.

It is, of course, true that individual patients do not always select the most competent or even the most attentive doctor practising in their district; but they are in better position to do so than could be any elected or bureaucratic committee.

The Health Insurance Act has, as I have said, been in operation for thirty years; and, so far from breaking down, it has steadily and sturdily developed. A very few more improvements and modifications, and I, for one, should regard its medical provisions, at any rate, as superior to any alternative scheme that has been proposed. Even the best doctoring, however, is no substitute for the basic conditions of health.

Harry Roberts

TRAINS AND CLASSES

During the last two years I have made an enormous number of train journeys all over the country. Except on short journeys, I usually travel first-class, not because I think of myself as belonging to a section of society that needs special carriages, but for the following reasons. I am a fairly bulky man and find the space allotted to me in a third-class carriage painfully inadequate after the first hour or two; I have as a rule some tiring job to do immediately I arrive at my destination; and I am pressed for time, and wish if possible to spend some of my hours in the train doing some necessary reading, making notes, preparing a speech or a broadcast. There may be an element of self-indulgence in all this, but on the whole I think my choice can be defended on functional grounds.

All this travelling has made me into an authority on the present wild muddle about first- and third-class compartments. I have seen the first-class carriages on empty trains successfully invaded by unchallenged holders of third-class tickets. I have seen people who had no white tickets kept out of half-empty firsts when the rest of the train was packed. I have stood for hours in the corridor, holding a first-class ticket, when the firsts were obviously filled with green-ticket holders. I have seen, in one compartment on a single journey, one person compelled to pay the extra fare, and another person left in peace without any such demand. I have seen people put into firsts and other people turned out of them. I have overheard hundreds of people telling each other that now in wartime there is no difference between firsts and thirds. I have also heard much argument, a great deal of bewildered or bitter comment, and mutterings that suggested that the class war was in sight.

Notice that this does not happen elsewhere.

The half-crown seats at the cinema are not suddenly invaded by people who have bought shilling seats. There are no bitter arguments at the entrance to the grandstands of football grounds. Grocers do not find themselves handing over three-shilling tins of salmon to customers who have paid for one-and-sixpenny tins. The haberdasher who sells two different qualities of shirts, collars and socks is not made to feel that he is exacerbating the class struggle. It is only in trains that there is this trouble. And it is only since the war began that the railway companies have had to face it.

What is the reason? First, of course, that there is a genuine muddle, due to the working of an uneasy compromise, no definite line having been drawn between first- and third-class travel. But this does not explain the bitterness. We must find another reason for this resentment, and after much observation and some thought I feel that I have discovered it. And it seems to me to have some importance because it shows what is happening in the public mind.

Briefly, then, I believe that the trouble is caused by the particular terms that are used. If the railway companies sold Big Seats and Little Seats (which is what the difference really amounts to), I do not think there would be any of this resentment, just as there is no resentment at the differently priced and situated seats in the cinema. What does the mischief is simply the use of the term *Class* in this connection. It suggests that first-class carriages are reserved for a different *kind* of people, just as in our army we still suggest that officers are a different *kind* of men from those in the ranks. It is this—and not the fact that some persons are ready to pay more for bigger seats—that so many of our people resent. They do not say so, of course, and probably do not know exactly what it is that is arousing their resentment, but after overhearing hundreds of mumblings and mutterings, I am convinced that this is the reason. There is, for example, a certain sort of large, loud-voiced, well-to-do woman who arrives majestically, almost bellowing that she is *First-Class*, who instantly becomes the target of their criticism. They feel instinctively that she considers herself to belong to another and higher order of humanity, and that the railway company is encouraging her in that belief.

It is worth noticing here that concerns that cater most successfully for the people are careful to avoid any suggestion of this class difference. Thus in all but the very newest theatres there are carpeted stairs for the stalls and dress circle, and horrible stone steps and grimy walls up to the gallery, plainly suggesting two different kinds of patrons. But in the large cinemas, run by men who understand the contemporary public, this suggestion is carefully avoided. Seats are sold at different prices, to suit individual tastes and pockets, but the arrangements are such as to suggest that all the patrons are roughly the same kind of people. It is the same with the popular catering establishments, big stores, and so on. They already have the air of existing in a classless society, socially if not economically.

This railway affair is comparatively unimportant, except perhaps to ticket inspectors, who always look worried. But it shows how the wind is blowing. This growing resentment of *Class* by the men in the Forces and the industrial workers is a fact. It remains a fact whether you approve or disapprove of it. You cannot argue it away, any more than you can argue Rommel out of the Libyan Desert. And there is an obvious danger in pretending it is not there.

The people who more and more resent this idea of *Class* have no particular passion for equality. They are not on the look-out for other people's privileges. Most of them are born hero-worshippers. Mr. Churchill can have a couple of special trains, for all they care. But they seem to me to have suddenly decided—and, I fancy, once and for all—that they are heartily sick of class divisions that have no relation to personal merit or public responsibility. The old evidence for inequality and privilege is not good enough. The assumption that it is makes them angry or derisive. Neither of these moods is good for the war effort, nor for that national unity we hear so much about from the Tory back benches.

Meanwhile, what about Big Seats and Little Seats, Wide and Narrow, Hard and Soft, anything but First-Class and Third-Class?

J. B. Priestley

A COUNTRY DIARY

Just as well, I thought, that Mr. Lyttelton told us that these were the most perilous days since the Battle of Britain, and just as well to remind the country that the convoys are getting through to Russia in spite of the long, bright nights with no cover from Germany's long-distance bombers. Certainly I have not come across enough "sense of urgency" on my week's holiday. Except perhaps among the group of working men at the National Labour College Summer School in North Wales, where I lectured, and among some officers I've talked with in the last few days. A second front now, while Soviet resistance holds, is surely what we want? So they all say. But it's not easy to know what to do about it. You are at once in the realm of technical detail. Now is the time obviously, says a young subaltern who is doing a special course of training. But his lot are not ready yet. Definitely. No good without proper training and preparation. Why weren't we ready for this year seeing we knew all about it last year? We must expect losses but we've got to be good enough to stay there and divert German forces. We can't have another Dunkirk. That won't help the Russians. Why the hell aren't we ready? Now's the time. And so the conversation goes—wherever the sense of urgency exists.

* * *

The arrival of Americans makes us feel that something is really happening. I believe that for the most part the two armies are settling down well together, but inevitably there will be some friction. Old soldiers, who recall how the Americans came over last time, fresh when we had had three years of fighting and said they had won the war—they are just the men who are putting things right between the British and American troops. Both British and American have had wise advice given to them to prevent friction. Difficulties are bound to arise because the Americans have far more money than the British, who are more sore about the allowances given to their wives than about anything else anyway. Also they are warned that Americans are apt to "swing a line" while the British always understate. An American recruit, naively pleased with his equipment, starts boosting his gas-mask. The English, smiling to themselves, egg him on a bit. The remark they would naturally make about their own mask is quite insincere, but traditional. They would curse the a uthorities for making them carry the thing at all, and add that anyway it would probably stop sweet Fanny Adams if it came to the test. An air officer who has seen much of the American troops here told me the other day not to think the friction would disappear just by politeness. Not enough just to avoid friction. We've got to learn to be together and fight together and live together and be at peace together afterwards. Therefore we should make a "constructive effort" to overcome misunderstandings. If there are a few fights in the process that won't matter; negative politeness won't get us anywhere. We had better find out how far we agree and can get together, and we can't do that if we are always afraid of hurting each other's susceptibilities.

* * *

Eight hours in the train and nothing to eat. For many people eight hours' weary standing in a crowded corridor. "Well," I said, consolingly, "we were told not to travel, weren't we? It's our fault, isn't it, if we are uncomfortable? Didn't someone say something about holidays at home this year? All very well if you have a garden. That's the great distinction in England to-day. A garden, only an allotment perhaps, lots of green peas and broad beans and new potatoes and fresh fruit . . . Why not spend your holiday at home, work in the garden and rest instead of trapesing about the country in crowded trains with everything getting on your nerves? But if you come from Lancashire and happen not to have an allotment, and if you are accustomed to see the sea at Blackpool once a year? The M.P. who complained that extra trains had been put on for these people from the black miseries, who must escape for a week once a year to have a memory, a change to talk about—that M.P. presumably has a car and a garden. Money is not the only thing these days. Real property is the thing. A garden matters most, and a garden per family after the war would be as attractive a war aim and peace promise as any I know of.

* * *

War or no war, the house had to be re-thatched if it was to be used. Fungus grew on the bedroom walls last winter where the damp got in. No; patching would be no more use. Quite a big job, really. Only Bill Parsons round our way could do it. He is over seventy, and reluctant to take it on in these days with so little help about. However, he was persuaded, and he is as proud of the job he has made of it as a schoolboy with his first poem or a five-year old with her first sand castle. I wish I could paint Bill Parsons. His sons are in the Forces; thatching is hard work, not well paid as a rule, and apparently less attractive to a generation that has visited towns in its young life. Parsons has been thatching for fifty years. He is just putting the ridging on the roof now, making a fine pair of thatched ears for each end of the roof. I went up the ladder to see him just now. "Do you reckon you could do one like it?" he asks, his face screwed up in a derisory grin that is all good humour and simple vanity. I shake my head, as I well may, as I see him sitting astride the roof knocking in the sprindles with his wooden mallet. "A rare mess you'd make of it," he assures me, pressing down the last yelm. "Mind you don't fall. I always say it's what you're used to. I don't take any more notice of working up here than you will walking on the ground."

* * *

Bill Parsons looks as if he were made of leather. He has the most humorous way of screwing up his nose to let you know that he is going to make a joke or pull your leg. He looks at you very slyly out of the corners of his eyes when money is under discussion. Once the bargain is struck he thinks of nothing except getting the thatch to do him credit. He listens for the passer-by to say: "That's a fine bit of thatching. It must be Bill Parsons at work up there. There, my lad, if you want to learn a skilled job you go and watch Bill Parsons." He is worth looking at. He wears knee breeches of the old-fashioned kind with a fob in front and a pair of leather knee pads strapped round his legs when he is on the roof. Round his neck is a red handkerchief tied in front, with the ends taken off left and right and twisted round his braces on each side, brought to the middle again, and knotted together finally somewhere over his solar plexus. He talks a choice Essex dialect; I know of no one except Bensusan who could exactly reproduce it. You find him first thing in the morning sitting on a little wooden bench, cutting sprindles from hazel rods. He uses a heavy chopping knife, first carefully splitting the rod from top to bottom, then paring it until he has left a thin white length of wood that he can twist with a single cunning turn of the wrist into a prong that, hammered down, serves to keep the straw in place for centuries. Then, when he has his sprindles prepared, he goes into the field and turns over the straw that is waiting. "Funny," he says to me, "you have to throw the straw about with a fork to get it straight. I only want the best. But you can't get straw like you used to." "Really?" I ask, "why not?" "I don't know," he says, "unless it's all these artificial manures they use now; the straw used to be big thick stuff, not these little old bits that break off short." Then he throws water over the selected straw and piles it up in his special contraption for carrying the bundle of yelms up the ladder. This is a chain and a piece of wood; he can adjust the chain so that the straw is tight against the piece of wood. Steadily he climbs up the ladder and lays the bundle in place, getting it so tight that birds and rats and rain are all for years excluded. He measures it off at the top and edges, finishing the job with a great sharp knife which cuts eyebrows over each window and a fine straight line with never a quaver in it all the way from the ear at the top to the overhanging edge where the hollyhocks push their heads up into the straw above them.

* * *

The most enjoyable day to me was when Mr. Bridges, the builder, came over to do a repair job to the lean-to at the end of the cottage which had to be adjusted with Bill Parsons' thatching. All day, as they worked, the back-chat went on. Bridges has a small team of workers left; he likes to go round with a carpenter, a mason, and an odd-job boy, and together the four of them will stick to the job till it's finished. "Where do you want this pole to go, Parsons?" calls Mr. Bridges, putting it deliberately in the wrong place so that we may all watch the scorn of the unsuspecting Parsons. Parsons looks cautiously at the pole and then at us. "No," he says, "there ain't room there for the gable to sit proper. Mine's a skilled job, you know," he adds, turning to me. "They always have to ask me," he says. And then he tells a story of how a gentleman nearby watched him splitting sprindles. "'That's a skilled job,' he says to me. 'Yes,' I says. 'Not like old bricklaying that anyone can do after trying a time or two.'" And the laugh is against Bridges. Uncovering the plaster, Bridges, who has a great experience of old houses, tells me he will soon be able to tell me how old my cottage is. Yes, triumphantly he produces some curved bits of ancient bark, holding the laths in place. "Osier pealings," he says. "The house must be four hundred years old and may be eight hundred, so they tell me. Why's that? Because they used the bark of osiers to tie the laths together before they had nails and long after they had nails, too, if nails were expensive or difficult to get in the district. Probably six hundred years ago it means in this district."

* * *

The cat, a delicate tortoiseshell of so friendly a disposition that she follows like a dog and persists in sleeping on the paper or typewriter when I'm trying to work, threatens to have kittens. Mr. Parsons, cocking an experienced eye, remarks, "You'll be killing all they kittens." I reply that, on the contrary, we thought of keeping one. "No good," he explains, "that will be a poor, scraggy little thing. Winter kittens mostly are. Lie under the grate and never get any size or strength in them. If you want a good cat you must keep one that comes in springtime and is growed a decent bit by this time of year." Mrs. Thomas, however, takes a different view. She says the kittens are certain to be good specimens. They were fathered in London. "All the cats up London," declares Mrs. Thomas on no authority that I can imagine, "are fine big cats."

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to "C. R. G. S."

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

For our success in the Battle of Britain we have to thank the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy, but without lessening our debt to these services, there is an astrological factor to which we owe even more, and that is the position of Jupiter in the horoscope of King George VI.—*The Queen.*

First-class passengers, such as Army officers and their wives, and professional men—people who normally enjoy peace and reasonable comfort in the seclusion of their "firsts," often have to tuck their toes in and put their magazines away. People squeeze in wherever they can.—*Western Mail.*

Mr. Leonard F. Behrens, speaking of the great amount of voluntary philanthropic work being done in Manchester and the country generally, said: "The more one thinks of the Good Samaritan the more one thinks that, somehow or other, he must have been an Englishman."—*Manchester Guardian.*

NOW you have tried all the "stunts," try "Jiffy-cult," the only genuine practical scientific philosophy. Particulars, 6d. "Jiffy."—Advertisement in *Peace News.*

In this the official was quite wrong and out of tune with the Ministry of Food, whose sympathy is with the artist, especially if he or she is a singer of Gilbert and Sullivan.—*The Times.*

FLORAL

YET another prohibition. Flower-growers are now forbidden to use more than a quarter of their pre-war land for the cultivation of flowers. Food for the body must take the place of food for the eye, and the rose and the daffodil must make way for the swede and the potato. It is, perhaps, symbolical of our time that it is an age of the retrocession of flowers. No longer is it a virtue to mingle the useful and the pleasant. We are bound to the wheel of utility for some years to come.

War, so far as I have observed, has done nothing to diminish the civilised appetite for flowers. Even in recently bomb-battered streets you would often see a flower-shop window bright with colour, and, though love of confectionery and tobacco is more widespread and more urgent than the love of flowers, there was no lack of customers for violets, tulips and carnations. Flowers had become so much a part of ordinary life that rooms looked bare without them. Hence the amateur gardener with a small patch of earth behind his house, when tempted by duty to grow tomatoes instead of lupins and columbines, stood out to an extraordinary degree against the temptation to sacrifice his flower-beds and preferred dining without salads to dining without flowers.

This love of flowers might be put down as escapist, and it is certainly one of the chief means by which thousands of men and women escape from the drabness of modern life. They do not mind living in an ugly villa if they have a pretty garden. They may care nothing for poetry or painting or music, but they are among the aesthetes at sight of anchusas and violas. And the love of flowers has this advantage over the love of the arts, that it leads to no quarrels of taste. The older and the younger generations differ on many matters, but not on the beauty of sweet peas. In regard only to a few flowers is there any hot division of opinion. One man may love, another hate, the yellow calceolaria. There are some to whom the cactus, loathed by many, is the flower of flowers. I myself have no great liking for the red-hot poker, or, if you prefer the botanical name, *Kniphofia aloides*; and I once met a man who spoke venomously of hollyhocks, which his wife loved. Still, the garden of to-day is changed curiously little from the garden of fifty years ago. The snowdrop and the crocus still open the year, and though there are new varieties of flowers, there are still the same flowers.

When, I wonder, did this love of garden flowers begin? So far as an ignoramus can discern, there are few signs of it in the Old Testament. The garden of Eden was a flowerless world. We are told that God said: "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth," but there is no mention of blooms such as we see in Sutton or Epsom gardens to-day. If it is true that it was with an apple that Eve tempted Adam, there must at one time of the year have been apple blossom; but scholars nowadays tell us that the forbidden fruit that led to the disobedience of our first parents was the tomato, and there are few duller flowers than the blossom of the tomato—the love-apple, as it is still said to be called among the heathen. There are no signs that the Israelites appreciated flowers till we come to the Psalms and the Song of Solomon. And even the Psalms dwell less on the loveliness of the flowers than on their momentary life, which has been the theme of the poets for centuries. "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." Yet that, to many of us, when we were children listening to the Bible being read, was one of the first intimations, not only of the impermanence, but of the exquisiteness of life. "As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth." When we heard the sentence read or sung at the funerals of our elders we knew that we, too, were part of a procession in which Spring would pass on into dying Autumn for ever and ever. The mood may not have lasted much after the funeral feast, but until then we were all in our imagination tragically short-lived flowers of the field.

How charming a break the Song of Solomon made in our services! Presbyterianism is supposed to be an austere creed, but what child, sitting in a Presbyterian church, ever missed the vision of a world in which his native place became a Paradise as he listened to the sentences: "I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." To many people nowadays the words may seem as nonsensical as Swinburne's, but I confess that to me they transformed the earth like Forbes Robertson's enunciation of the great speeches of Hamlet. "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." That still seems to me to be a good sentence. So was it when my life began, so is it now I am a man, and that is all there is to be said about it.

The New Testament, too, brought the same entrancing light into the old church, built in imitation of a Greek temple, with the sunshine reaching us through modern stained-glass windows containing images of Calvin and John Knox. Or was one of them Henry Cooke? "Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Is there a lovelier sentence in literature? Joseph Chamberlain in his Radical days rather vulgarised it by the suggestion that "They toil not, neither do they spin" was a description not only of the lilies but of the idle rich. But we did not read politics into the sentence then, and we do not read politics into it now. The words still awake the imagination to the spectacle of an efflorescent springtime earth.

Even so, one never gets the impression that the Christian world was a garden as the pagan world of the Greeks was. I am not a scholar, but ever since I was at school, I have thought of the Greek world as a place luxuriant with hyacinths, irises, violets and mallows. And when I dipped into the Loeb translation of the *Deipnosophists* the other day, I found my memories confirmed. Page after page is filled with descriptions of flowers proper to be worn in wreaths at banquets—"the crocus closing in the Spring-time, henna, too, and bergamot-mint with pungent smell, and all the beauties which a meadow wears without cultivation in hollow watered places, ox-eye and fragrant pink, chrysanthemums and hyacinth withal, and dark violets close to the ground, which Persephone loathed amongst flowers." What a strange light this throws on the tastes of Persephone! How different from Perdita's!

The Greeks, however, unlike the English, seem never to have loved beauty for beauty's sake. They thought that it should be associated with the true or the good or even the useful. We can observe how utilitarian was their love of flowers as we read the advice of one of their physicians as to the flowers of which wreaths could be composed at banquets. This physician, Andreas, urged his fellow-citizens to remember that one of the original purposes of wearing wreaths was "to aid them against the disadvantages of drunkenness"; and he went on: "And so a myrtle wreath which is astringent can dispel the fumes of wine; or again a wreath of roses, which has a sedative power against headache, and is to a certain extent cooling . . . But a wreath of gillyflowers, which excite the nerves of the head, or one of marjoram, in fact all those that are capable of stupefying, or otherwise oppressing the head, must be avoided."

It is impossible to imagine such sentences being written in modern England. There was a famous Victorian song called "She Wore a Wreath of Roses," and it would certainly never have won its place in the concert hall and the drawing-room if the "she" to whom it referred had been a lady who wore her wreath as a preventive of a drunken headache or because roses are "to a certain extent cooling." I have a number of friends who wear roses in their buttonholes, but I have never suspected them of doing so in the hope of mitigating the effects of a carousal.

I am sorry to see that the Americans are just now imitating the Greeks rather than the English in their attitude to flowers. I read the other day a paragraph in a newspaper which had the heading "Be beautiful, and so help to beat Hitler," and learned that a New York flower-shop has a sign in its window: "Morale brings victory—flowers build morale." Such considerations seem to me to be totally irrelevant. This wearing of posies in order to beat Hitler or strengthen one's morale may be in the Greek tradition, but modern man should have got beyond this and have learned to enjoy flowers merely for their colours, their perfumes and their names. The poets at their greatest have never asked of a flower more than it should be beautiful, and neither does the little man with a garden in Tooting Bec. Flowers are as useless as the moon and as all the stars except one, and their uselessness is one of the elements of their glory.

Y.Y.

FAME AND PROMISE

The summer exhibition at the Leicester Galleries continues to serve its admirable purpose, which is, I take it, to give young and even quite unknown artists a chance of measuring themselves and being measured by high standards. For promising students and rising painters it is a test and a stimulant; for judicious collectors a hunting ground. This year standards of painting are set by Bonnard, Sickert, Guillaumin, Ivon Hitchens, Duncan Grant and Gore, and of drawing by Guys, Matisse, Anquetin and Alfred Stevens. About these paragons I do not propose to say a word; unless it be that once again we are made to feel of how much we were deprived by Gore's untimely death, and that Sickert's minute *Plage* will be a prize for some knowing amateur. Also it may be proper to mention a minor, a minim, master who, although by no means qualified to set an example, happens here to be represented by an uncommonly lucky achievement, by something more coherent and less ostentatiously weak than anything I have seen for some time by Conder.

Of the works of promise the first to catch my eye were two remarkable pastels by Kenneth Martin. These, I think, are to be preferred to his oil-painting (No. 83), a nice picture which might have been pushed further: odd though it may sound, the pastels are tougher, firmer. In the front room, where the drawings are hung, I found good things by Kenneth Rowntree and Michael Rothenstein. Of the new-comers Ruskin Spear has been tried pretty high, seeing that his little Nude is put next a Bonnard. It comes well out of the ordeal. The head, to be sure, seems to have been painted in a spirit different from that in which the rest of the figure was conceived—possibly it was repainted; hence a slight sense of disunity: but this is hypercriticism. Robert Buhler is a young artist who has raised hopes which his two small pictures do not belie; but his large piece (No. 104) is a failure, being little more than what lawyers call "common form." Robin Pearce is experimenting, as a young man should. Neither of his pictures is quite successful, but both—the quasi-abstract *Plough* in particular—justify those who hailed his first appearance as the manifestation of a new talent. Pasmore's *Still Life* is a bit of pleasure awaiting anyone who happens to be passing this way: but Pasmore, I suppose, is now of the famous. It would be a pity if John Armstrong's literary preoccupations, with which he so provocatively dresses his shop window, were to blind visitors to the exquisite quality of paint concealed in such a picture as *The Swarm*.

Space remains only to mention several artists whose work merits critical attention. Dorothy Annan—a new name to me—reveals a delicate, feminine gift. The art of William Scott is tolerably well known in Paris and deserves to be better known in London. If Anthony Kerr is, as I hope, still young, certainly he is a painter of promise. Benita Armstrong, a pupil of that graceful sculptor Ehrlich (himself represented by two *Heads*) shows sensibility and, for a student, surprising control of her medium. In both his pictures Morland Lewis does himself justice: one could wish he received more. Carel Weight is amusing.

CLIVE BELL

THE PROMS.

Now that the Proms. are in full swing one feels more acutely than ever the tragic absence of the Queen's Hall. Gift-horses must not be looked in the mouth—especially in war-time; but it were an impertinence to criticise solo performances—and even more, new works—when all that one hears is a mere simulacrum of what is taking place over there, in the far distance of the platform.

A glance at the schedule reveals a divided aim: to be popular, and to cover the ground adequately. The result is not really very satisfactory: there is not *nearly* enough Mozart or Haydn; there is too much Beethoven, several of whose works are repeated; a composer like Sir Arnold Bax is very poorly represented; and, to make matters worse, far too little of the programmes is being broadcast.

But when that is said, the programmes have so far not been dull, and the level of performance has been high. Clifford Curzon has given first-class renderings of Tchaikovsky's First and Brahms's Second Concertos—the second one of the best interpretations I have heard: his playing was on the scale of the music and—unlike Horowitz—he did not make the work sound as if it were by Litolff. Again, Moura Lympany's performance of Beethoven's Fourth Concerto showed (as far as I could hear) that this young pianist can now achieve something more than mere brilliance.

Of the new works I have only heard E. J. Moeran's Violin Concerto. I will not say this disappointed me, for I was not expecting very much. The work certainly seemed very long and rambling; but the last movement had a lyrical warmth. Perhaps future performances will reveal more.

It was a specially moving experience to hear the London Symphony of Vaughan-Williams again in present circumstances. This magnificently poetic evocation of a great city, with its elegy for the fallen in the last war, reminded one of the indestructible essence of London that no bomb can touch. The misty blue of November in a Bloomsbury square (the jingle of the hansom seems right, even now), the Whistler nocturne of the Scherzo, the melancholy grandeur of the epilogue: after twenty years the impression is stronger and more beautiful than ever, and convinces one that here is one of the few great symphonies we have to our credit.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

THE MOVIES

"Uncensored," at the Leicester Square.
"Always in My Heart," at Warner's.

Our array of war films grows steadily more impressive, and we owe a special gratitude to the directors who choose for their theme the life in occupied countries. Norway, France, Belgium, Holland—there have been glimpses, tragic yet reassuring, from each of these. It is one way of getting behind the enemy's lines, of colouring the immense map that stretches between ourselves and Russia. Brussels, before and after invasion, is the scene of Mr. Anthony Asquith's *Uncensored*; the Nazis roll forward, flame-throwers are directed against women and children hiding in a shelter, a loudspeaker announces the occupation, the press is liquidated, the sentry and the spy appear on every corner. Resistance to oppression takes the form of an underground newspaper, *La Libre Belgique*, a revival from the occupation of 1914-18. Among those who help to produce it are a priest, an avowedly Quisling editor, and a music-hall singer. The music-hall, of which we see a good deal, provides ironic touches. The flamboyant interior, the drama behind the scenes, the drearily jaunty songs and popping corks that distinguish this nightly meeting-place of *tout Bruxelles*, have been admirably realised. The plump wife of a Nazi general flutters foolishly under the gaze of the star singer (it is he who is busy all day with *La Libre Belgique*), a waiter before pouring champagne for one of the conquerors spits surreptitiously in the glass—in such details Mr. Asquith shows himself, as we might expect, sensitively alert, and there is always something in his photography to hold the eye. Yet despite good acting (Eric Portman and Peter Glenville particularly deserve mention), a dramatic story and a theme certain to rouse sympathy and admiration, *Uncensored* just falls short of excellence. For, among war films, it certainly did not move me as did *Next of Kin* or *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, and in the realm of pure excitement *Maltese Falcon* grips harder. Why, I wonder? Partly, perhaps, because Mr. Asquith has taken the characters of his well-made story a little too coolly, so that at no moment is our feeling very deeply involved with them; partly also, I think, because there is a saturation point in such films when their news-value (if one may call it that) falls dangerously low. There can be no doubt that *Uncensored* is a more finished piece of work than the same director's *Freedom Radio*, yet the earlier film made—upon me at any rate—a deeper impression.

Always in my Heart is a "musical" with a new star, Gloria Warren. She is a pretty girl of the Deanna breed, with a pretty voice, and carols on a bicycle with a puppy in front. Daddy conducts the orchestra in jail. "Mudge" doesn't do anything except listen, but from time to time a rabble of fishermen come up from the sea playing mouth-organs. So groggy, in fact, is the whole cast with sweet mewsic that Daddy returning home after his twelve years' stretch, welcomes a six-year-old among his children without flicking an eyelid. That seems to me the only flaw in an otherwise blamelessly moronic tale.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

Correspondence

VANSITTARTISM

SIR,—The open letter to Lord Vansittart was up to the very best standards of the NEW STATESMAN. I do wish, however, that you had stated even more bluntly that those whom the spirit moves to "explain" Germany and the German enigma for the benefit of English readers would be well-advised to acquire some knowledge—however slight—about the course of German history. This war has produced the usual spate of books and pamphlets about the enemy. A hasty judgment might condemn these as written with the specific purpose of obfuscating the issue. There are, of course, noteworthy exceptions, but the general practice of founding a philosophy of history upon the basis of three known facts—the quotation from Tacitus, the seizure of Silesia by Frederick the Great, and the proven ruthlessness of Bismarck—is becoming a little tedious. The original efforts may at first have aroused the admiration that is always felt for a plucky attempt, but the black record of consistent failure evokes the query whether all this is the product of courage or mere recklessness. The obvious parallel between the three facts and Lord Gort's twenty-three tanks needs no elaboration.

It is not unusual for a nation, after having achieved unity, to attack its next-door neighbour. Our own Hundred Years' War against France, and then, when France in its turn has ultimately become united in resistance to the aggressor, the Italian wars of Charles VIII are familiar illustrations of this historical truism. It is particularly unfortunate that Germany did not become a nation in the era of small armies equipped with the longbow and the pike.

There are so many simple textbooks (in German) available to the hopeful " expert " on Germany, that it would be redundant, even if space were available, to indicate the reasons why Germany developed so late, or why German politicians during the past century have always been so ready to accept the perverse doctrines of a Hegel, a Treitschke, or a Houston Stewart Chamberlain. As an introductory lesson it might, however, be suggested that special attention should be paid to the connection between the German monarchy and the Holy Roman Empire, with its consequent feud between the Hohenstaufen and the Papacy; the power of the Church in Germany as instanced by the three Rhineland archbishoprics; the Golden Bull of Charles IV; the causes and results of the Thirty Years' War; and the disastrous eighteenth-century " reception " of French culture by a country which was not ready for it.

FRANK LEWIS

ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE BLACK MARKET

SIR,—Professor Levy notes the impression widely held among thoughtful people that newspapers tend to give undue prominence to Jewish cases in the Black Market, perhaps because of their stunt value. While all responsible Jews deplore the participation by members of their community in the traffic, and are doing everything possible to bring home to the offenders the enormity of their unsocial acts, they are concerned at this exaggerated notice given in the Press to the cases in which Jews are implicated. It is not due generally to deliberate anti-semitism on the part of editors, but to the fact that the public are more attracted by cases in which persons with foreign names are concerned. They find—irrationally—a vent for their resentment and for their desire to hit out at someone.

It has not been possible to obtain figures of the total number of offenders prosecuted over any given period. But some facts and figures about prosecutions having special importance which were recently communicated by the Ministry of Food to a Jewish Council that has been formed to combat the evil, indicate that the selection of cases reported by the national newspapers gives a distorted view of the Jewish part. For the five weeks ending May 23 there were 50 such cases, in three of which Jews were wholly or partly concerned. While the trade paper *The Grocer* reported about the same period 48 cases, in three of which Jewish firms were concerned, those three were reported in the national Press, and very few of the remaining 45 were reported. Thus the idea is given that a large part of the prosecutions are brought against Jewish firms. It is because public feeling is naturally incensed against Black Market profiteers that the excessive attention to the part which Jews have in the traffic is mischievous and dangerous. It is calculated to arouse that anti-semitism which has been one of the foulest and most insidious weapons of the Nazis.

Another of your correspondents has suggested that anti-semitism should be made the subject of dispassionate research. No question of our time has been the subject of so much inquiry, passionate or dispassionate. But the causes are not obscure, though they are diverse: religious, economic, social and atheistic. The remedies for the evil are less obvious. But the transformation of the half million Jews in Palestine within one generation into an upstanding people with a normal economic distribution, and the elimination of anti-semitism within one generation in Soviet Russia, give hope for the future.

Hollycot, NORMAN BENTWICH
Vale of Health,
Hampstead.

THE SECOND FRONT

SIR,—The question of a second front turns not on whether it is urgently necessary to help Russia to the limit of our capacity, regardless of cost, about which there need be no dispute, but whether any attempt which we are able to make to land on the Continent at the present time would force the Germans to withdraw either planes or tanks or troops from the Eastern front to the profit of Russia.

A war strategy group, of which I am a member, has recently studied this problem, and on the information available, and the conclusion reached was that in existing conditions, which include absence of mastery (not merely superiority) in the air and of a port, the operation could only end in rapid and complete failure—without aiding Russia in the least.

Army and Navy Club, CLIVE GARSIA
Pall Mall, S.W.1.

SOCIALIST APPEAL

SIR,—I do not think the remarks made by " Critic " in last week's issue of your paper can be permitted to go unanswered by anyone who has read even a single copy of the " Socialist Appeal," for the flagrant misrepresentation of your contributor are of too serious a character to ignore.

" Critic " does not say so directly, but undoubtedly means to imply that the men quoted by Mr. Joseph Hall, President of the Yorkshire Miners' Association as being paid £10 per week for distributing subversive literature in the minefields are not only agents of the " Socialist Appeal," but are also in the pay of Hitler. The inference is unmistakeable; " Critic " would like to see the paper suppressed on these grounds, and he may not be long disappointed in this, for right now a vicious campaign is being worked up by the gutter Press to achieve this object.

Permit me to point out firstly, that no one with any acquaintance of the history of the *Socialist Appeal* can believe for a moment that the paper has ever possessed sufficient funds to pay its distributors even ten shillings a week. Indeed, the *Daily Express* reports that the Editor of the *Appeal* receives as his wage the princely sum of £1 weekly (15/7/42.) If Mr. Joseph Hall could be persuaded to produce one—just one—of these highly paid agitators the general public would be greatly enlightened, Mr. Hall would have the satisfaction of knowing that his future statements would be believed, and " Critic " would, for once, have got his facts right.

As the *Appeal* is the organ of the Trotskyists, it is scarcely surprising that Leon Trotsky's portrait should appear in its columns. The horror with which " Critic " records this very obvious fact is laughable—and significantly indicative of his own political orientation. As for his statement that the paper is opposed to increased production because it is opposed to Joint Production Committees, mere perusal of any issue will suffice to show that it is precisely because of its demand for increased production that the *Appeal* is opposed to these Committees and their snare of class-collaboration, counterposing to them the slogan of direct workers' control of production, deeming maximum production under the auspices of the capitalists to be an impossibility.

The charge that the paper makes repeated attacks on the Soviet Union is palpably dishonest, and I defy " Critic " to produce a single quotation which can be fairly construed to mean this. On the contrary, the *Socialist Appeal* emulates the Fourth International and Leon Trotsky himself, in proclaiming the defence of the Soviet Union to be among its chiefest aims, and no amount of distortion can cancel out the long list of pamphlets and statements made by the movement in which the defence of the U.S.S.R. is made the main theme. The attitude of the paper to the Soviet Union is identical with its attitude to the Yorkshire Miners' Association; that is to say while it attacks the leadership for its disastrous policies it nevertheless defends to the uttermost the organisation itself as a genuine workers' trade union. In the same way, while attacking Stalin and the enormous bureaucracy which has led the working class to defeat after defeat it defends the Soviet Union as a workers' State. That should have been obvious to anybody who read the paper with the intention of finding out its policy.

In conclusion may I say that there is just one point on which " Critic " and myself agree. Like him I can see no reason for the *Daily Worker* to be suppressed, and if he cares to read the files of the *Socialist Appeal* he will see that that paper, too, stands for the removal of the ban.

W. CHALK

60 Merevale Avenue, Hinckley, Leics.

DE LA MARE

SIR,—Mr. Spender has authority both as a poet and a critic; what he says, therefore, about a poet who does not belong to the group of which he himself is one of the acknowledged leaders, has more than a momentary interest.

So far as I understand him, Mr. Spender's general conclusion is that de la Mare is a good poet whom we should nevertheless not take too seriously: he is " simply one of the most individual writers of our age " : just that. This, I think, is what Mr. Spender discovers when he has steered between the regrettable extremes which he has found in the critical estimates of others: indiscriminate gush and contemptuous dismissal.

In the course of his review Mr. Spender writes: " His (de la Mare's) writing goes direct to the timeless subjects of poetry—death, dream, ' the mystery at the heart of things ' " ; then, a little farther on: " In closing the doors of his consciousness to the phenomena and even the feelings which one thinks of as peculiarly modern, Walter de la Mare has one great advantage: he evades the problem of having to cope with the fashionable, the ephemeral, that which seems important to us and may not to other generations. But he runs another kind of risk: that of missing life altogether in the course of missing it as it is actually lived by his contemporaries."

What sort of sense is this? If a poet goes straight to the mystery at the heart of things, he cannot run the risk of " missing life altogether." If the mystery at the heart of things means anything at all, it means the ultimate truth of life so far as we can grasp it; and to go straight to that is hardly to miss life altogether. On the contrary, it is to do what only the greatest have done. Why, moreover, should it be an " advantage " to evade the problem of having to cope with the fashionable and ephemeral? It is difficult to admit that it was just good luck for de la Mare to avoid what is not permanently interesting.

Again, Mr. Spender finds in de la Mare's best poetry " a quality which is only to be found in the purest lyrics " ; and he gives as instances of that lyricism the songs of Shakespeare and Blake. That is high praise for a poet who is " simply one of the most individual writers of our age." In a later paragraph, however, he confounds that praise by attempting to relate de la Mare's poetic world with the poetic world of Gautier. De la Mare, in fact, goes straight to the mystery at the heart of things, writes lyrics comparable to those of Shakespeare and Blake—and has a certain affinity with Gautier. That is surely odd. Further, in describing the lyric quality of Shakespeare, Blake and de la Mare, Mr. Spender says that it is that of " creating a poem in the limpid sounds and translucent imagery of words, which we do not take to refer beyond the words to the reality from which the words draw their meanings." But don't we? Frankly, I do not understand the theory of language implied in this sentence; and an image, especially if it is a *translucent* image, must surely be the image *of* something.

AUBREY DE SELINCOURT

SALVAGE

SIR,—Whilst the clamour for salvage continues, I would suggest that all iron advertisements throughout the length and breadth of these isles should be removed and handed over for scrap. They are, anyhow, an acute eyesore, and would not be missed; their usefulness is gone, as most of the articles they extol so enthusiastically can now no longer be procured.

DOROTHY ALLHUSEN

"PENNY WISE"

SIR,—The letter, signed Country Doctor, under the above heading, distressed me greatly. Has your correspondent never heard of our organisation, which exists to help cases such as he mentions, and has branches all over England, the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association? If he, or his patient, will go to the local H.Q. she will be given advice, and, if needed, immediate financial aid. I always feel that we should advertise more, and here is a case which proves my contention. Any wife, widow, or dependent of a member of the Forces is our special care, and we can do so much to help.

ELIZABETH CHETWODE

BOOKS IN GENERAL

> Our eyes, however, still gazed at the shore: Happy isle (said I to the Marquis) all too happy inhabitants, if they are aware of the advantages they enjoy from their climate and their situation! What do they lack of all that goes to make the pleasures and conveniences of life? Let us first consider the natural conditions: the heat of their summers is not excessive, nor the cold of their winters too severe . . . To their own they add the rarest and most precious products of all the countries in the world . . . which are then distributed proportionately through all parts of the island, without regard to power, authority or birth.

WHERE was this earthly paradise, this land flowing with milk, honey and equanimity? It was the England of about the year 1730. The departing traveller was the Abbé Prévost. Last week, when I had finished reading *Manon Lescaut*, I came upon the foregoing in a volume of *The Man of Quality* (Routledge: The Broadway Library), the long serial novel of which *Manon Lescaut* is an off-shoot; and dipping into the introduction by Miss M. E. I. Robertson, I read the startling news that the plump, Cupid-like Benedictine with the innocent eyes and the private life far from innocent, had revolutionised Anglo-French relations. How often they have needed a revolution! A popular novelist, the Abbé Prévost was the first to convey to the large public which did not read Voltaire and Montesquieu, that our Black Record on the Continent was undeserved. The Jacobites—the Quislings of the period—had poisoned public opinion about us on the Continent; we were thought of as turbulent, inhibited and bloody-minded materialists who assassinated Kings, tortured the Catholic martyrs, and, under Cromwell, had lent ourselves to a cruel and disgraceful revolution. One Frenchman who visited England in 1643–5, wanted "to see the whole rabble drowned in pairs"; ten years later, to another traveller, we were "an abominable island, a hell of demons and parricides," and in comparison with the Scots of the "auld alliance" we were "a proud and seditious race, of evil conscience and faithless to our word," "a nation of hangmen." In time, an exchange of refugees had elevated these compliments. Our exiled Cavaliers helped us in France, and the large number of the French Protestant exiles in England formed a very different opinion of us—a higher opinion of us, very often, than of other French Protestant exiles. And when the tolerance of the eighteenth century set in after the wars of religion, the possibility of civilised intercourse between nations became real at last. To serious Frenchmen who travelled to England very much as English intellectuals have gone to Russia in the last 20 years, England was a mysterious, constitutional paradise. It was a sociological Eden where parliamentary government bloomed nobly beside *habeas corpus*, and limited monarchy cast its grateful shade upon the happy heads of represented taxpayers. Brutes though we were, with our prize-fighting, the coarseness of manners, the bear garden of the Stock Exchange and the fevered muscling-in of our tradesmen, we had apparently solved the political problem, like sensible, enlightened, level-headed men. So England seemed to many serious Frenchmen; it seemed even better to the Abbé Prévost, who was not serious at all.

To this fugitive priest who had broken his vows and who was already a romancer as prolific as Dumas or Hollywood, England was a dream island and not a unique social experiment. He gazed at the austerely planned City which had risen after the Fire, he considered the greatness of the South Sea Company, he looked at the "conveniency" and common sense which the eighteenth century had made into its ideals; he saw even the corruption and licentiousness which were the price we paid for our practical complaisance. But instead of all these things, he saw an alternative island: a place of beautiful women, devouring passions, stormy crimes and overwhelming despairs. Years before their time, he saw the moaning of *Clarissa*, the horrifying romances of Mrs. Radcliffe; he saw, not the hard head, but the broken heart. He enchanted the French public with an England that never was; a place of heaving bosoms, pistol shots, disguises, frightful family histories, awful guilts, sinister masquerades. In a similar way, if we look at our own time, Hollywood has put over a fabulous picture of America. It is not a real America, yet the fiction has been one of the most important factors in popular culture during the last forty years; and the historian of a hundred years hence could not afford to overlook its enormous effect upon the public imagination. So Rousseau wept over *Cleveland* and Prévost's translation or transmogrification of *Clarissa*. They were not reading about England, but were imbibing a native wine which had been sent on a journey.

I suppose no one nowadays could read a book like *Cleveland*, and I cannot be enthusiastic about the English volume of *The Man of Quality*. The Hollywood of two centuries ago is unbearable. But I have been amused by a patient and sardonic book by Claire Eliane Engel, published in Paris in the first year of the war by the Editions "Je Sers" and called *Figures et Aventures du XVIIIe siécle*, which sets out to show that if you push back the beginnings of the Romantic movement to 1730, you will find that its inspiration came from France and not England; in other words from Prévost's plagiarisms, burglaries and sublime misrepresentations. Here the author is very amusing. We must all be amazed at the amount of work Prévost turned out in his lifetime; he boasted that he wrote eight hours a day, between emotional crises; there are 200 volumes. Mlle. Engel gives us the answer. The Abbé, who somehow managed the rather remarkable juggling feat of being a Jesuit, a Benedictine, a man of the world, an interminable conversationalist, a one-man Ministry of Information, and a very active lover of women, a man whose sorrows, so he said, were written on his ravaged face—though here his portraits belie him—solved the problem of being a successful author with equal discretion. He simply took the themes, the plots and many of the characters of English novels and planted them shamelessly in his own compendium. Whole chunks of *Robinson Crusoe* went into *Cleveland*; and "with advantages." Landing on a desert island the sailors discover not one footprint, but a mob of footprints in the sand. *Moll Flanders*, *Pamela*, Cook's voyages—anything that came to hand was seized and passed through the light of the Abbé's exorbitant fancy. In his self-chosen task of spreading the fame of England, Prévost chose the method of spreading it very thick.

The strange thing is that his admiration of English things, his thorough knowledge of the English language, his unusual travels in England and his love of mixing with the people, should have given him little desire to report what he saw. He had his review, *Le Pour et le Contre*, imitated and often cribbed from *The Spectator*. Here and there we read something at first hand—the description of the prize fight in *The Man of Quality*, the account of a lunch with a Protestant bishop, the Bishop of Chichester and family. But we learn, by a glance at Miss Robertson's introduction, that he was merely doing the conventional thing: all travellers wrote (as Prévost did) of the bloody prize fights, the number of steps to the top of the Monument, the "forest of masts" on the Thames. It also turns out that Prévost's particular bishop was not a bishop at the time! The Abbé's inaccurate habits, and especially his preoccupation with the English past, indicate a peculiarity of his own character and one of the first snares of travel. We find in a country what we take there. We are enormously prejudiced and deluded by what we know of the past. There are Americans who insist on thinking London Dickensian. There are (or were) Frenchmen who persisted in thinking of Spain in terms of *Carmen*. In literature this is notorious: Lawrence's Mexicans, Chateaubriand's Indians, Borrow's Spaniards, are examples of delusions which have, so to say, made good. And who will say that these delusions are entirely without their germ of truth? Borrow's rabid Bible Protestantism comes nearer to the fanatical individualism of the Spaniards than many another book of dull, undeluded survey.

Can we find such an unconscious sympathy or hidden affinity in Prévost? They must, I think, have existed. The traveller, however humble, who adopts a country for a time and makes it serve his needs goes there as a conqueror. His sensibility enslaves what he sees. He takes what suits him; that is to say he takes things which are near enough to things in himself to be bent to his will. For Prévost, with his dubious history as a priest, one of the great attractions that England offered was ease of conscience. He was impressed, he was released by the English compromise. But that compromise was achieved only by strong repressions; and the rise of the dark, turbulent, haunted spirit of Methodism in the Age of Reason is an indication of what lay underneath the convenient English calm. A not dissimilar unrest was, it is evident, in the heart of Prévost. He did not notice the rise of Methodism; but he did not need to do so. He brought that unrest with him from France. Perhaps his fabulous, tortured, morbid, overheated pictures of English life were not so far wrong: they represent an English potential to which his imagination was instantly sensitive. Inaccurate or deluded travellers—to go back to Borrow again—are often intuitive in their illusions.

But we were chiefly in Prévost's debt for a simple and comprehensive compliment: he declared that we were civilised. It is a considerable event, after generations of war, when one nation begins to call another civilised. There is something to be said for international idealisation. The illusions of Prévost are a private matter: they are the product of a sunny amoral nature and —as we see in his single good book, *Manon Lescaut*—they are his credential for the understanding of a universal human tragedy: the disaster, the tragedy which the living and losing of an illusion means. The Abbé's life was often painful and squalid. It was fortunate that he had the gift of enlarging his feelings to an ideal dimension and wafting himself along in a dream. His dream must have been half his nature, for nearly all accounts of him are pleasing ones. They stress the innocence, the simplicity, of this helpless libertine and natural plagiarist. Plump as a sugar plum, beaming, shy, he gazes like a baby entranced by the world. An experienced baby, of course, but even when, driven by his insatiable mistress, he forged a promissory note in the hand of his benefactor for the sum of £50, and was up for trial at the Guildhall, no one seems to have blamed him. His victim did not prosecute. The records read "Prisoner discharged." He was brought to justice in a Chair (the papers wrote) and left prison in a Coach. Money, the sense of copyright—they meant nothing to him. And one sees the whole character of this affecting and original propagandist in that account of his old age where his mistress keeps his clothes locked up, so that he will not drift away from the illusions that are paying the rent and pursue others, feminine to the end, which will call in the bailiff.

V. S. PRITCHETT

INTERIM EPITAPH

Bowen's Court. By ELIZABETH BOWEN. *Longman's.* 16*s.*

For the last twenty-five years the English rural landlord has had, consistently, the worst of his bargain: he has been the whipping boy of far less defensible types of person. After several centuries of supremacy this may seem fair; it is certainly the case. Social and political writers of this inter-war period have allowed little or no distinction between the rural landlords and the class that grew to such absurd proportions in those muddled years: people who, having made anything between £2,000 and £15,000 a year out of various kinds of financial juggling, settled down in villas with an acre or less of garden, undertook no responsibilities to the neighbourhood (which was often a mere dormitory to them), and spent their money on Cadillacs, cocktails and week-ends at Le Touquet; while the local grandee, struggling to act fairly by a property of several thousand acres and a mass of tenants, was forced to spend capital by a government that wanted to eat its cake and have it.

The war has to some extent destroyed this anomaly; but the disastrous foreign policy that led to the war was to a large extent the result of a home policy that insulted and injured the landowner without depriving him of power; and this, as Miss Bowen points out at the end of a book that is interesting, beautiful and important, was a very dangerous thing to do. "We have everything to dread from the dispossessed." They turn easily into fascists.

The Ireland of this book reveals a rather different state of affairs.

> The Irish and the English squire are very differently placed: the first is imposed and the second indigenous. The English squire considers God gave him a function, the Irish considers himself his own end, put where he is by some sport of the Divine will—in fact, an aristocrat. The English squire can, or could till quite lately, combine with the parson in dragooning the lower classes into healthy activities; exceedingly conscientious, he feels he is where he is to teach the poor what is what. . . . The Irish landowner, partly from laziness but also from an indifferent delicacy, does not interfere in the lives of the people round. . . . On the whole, I think it is English rather than Irish country life that is singular and phenomenal. Irish country life, in Henry III's day and to an extent now, is more on the general pattern of that in France, Italy, Poland and pre-revolution Russia—the outstanding difference is the religious split, and also, the fact that the Ascendency classes came, in the first place, from a different land.

Miss Bowen's family was originally Welsh; her ancestor, Henry Bowen, came to Ireland as a lieutenant-colonel in Cromwell's army, acquired land in the north-east corner of County Cork, and moved his family there—for good, as it turned out. After that the Bowen fortunes follow a course instructively typical of the Anglo-Irish legend: internal wrangling, litigation (the Anglo-Irish were always as litigious as the French), accretion of money and land at a peak round about 1750, the building of a severely classical "seat," the long luxuriant summer of the nineteenth century, tasselled and upholstered and populous with children, with picnics and family groups on the lawn, uncles and aunts, and long walks in the late afternoon under the heavy trees, down by the river; then the first chill wind of discontent, the crack in the solid edifice, the appearance of *Wanderlust*, the house half empty, the children gone . . .

On the whole the Bowens seem to have had average good luck. This is usually the result of high spirits and self-confidence, qualities eminently possessed by Miss Bowen's favourite ancestor, Henry III (as she neatly calls him), who built Bowen's Court and cut a dash at the neighbouring town of Mallow, the Irish Bath, then in its heyday. Miss Bowen makes out the best case she can for Mallow, but I can't help feeling it must have been pretty "Rowlandson," and savagely provincial at that. Her portrait of Henry III is more convincing; indeed, her handling of all the main characters in her story is masterly in its distinctness, its insight and its avoidance of the picturesque conjecture. Miss Bowen is also resolutely Irish in her sympathies, and therefore against the Union, which she regards as a disaster. Her intransigence on this subject is no doubt a reflection of the excellent relations between her family and the Irish peasantry, which is a striking feature of the book and accounts also for the fact that Bowen's Court survived the troubles unscathed.

> I can only say, we could not have been better treated if we had been popular—our hardnesses have been pardoned, our vagaries suffered, our dicta accepted with reservations so tactful that we are not aware of them and our characters thoroughly understood. . . . It is possible that the post-Union blight on their class—or, at least, the blight on its morale—brought out the best in the Bowen character. They do seem as a family to have got slightly better as the Anglo-Irish in general got slightly worse. From the pollarded tree they made a shoot of their own. It was largely moral—but they did keep their heads. . . .

Such a family—swaggering in 1750, consolidating its position at the turn of the eighteenth century, stern—hard, even, on occasion—but rigidly just and responsible in the person of the author's grandfather—such a family is one to be proud of, because it marches with all periods instead of sticking out at right angles to them, or running away into the sands of early extinction. Yet there comes a point, in the history of all such families, when the heir feels a loyalty stronger than that to his inheritance. It may be to another career, to an "unsuitable" woman, or to some eccentric passion of the mind: the result is the same, the conflict—as Miss Bowen says, in her account of her father's life—Shakespearean, and royal in miniature. This is the point at which an elegiac thread enters the gay, crisp harmony of her narrative, for it is here that the story of Bowen's Court assumes its autumn colours. Robert Cole Bowen, the tremendous Victorian patriarch, has the pathos of all strong characters, whose will expires with their deaths. His son, with his sensitive intelligence and his delicate health, was no match for his father; yet he was obstinately determined to escape the fate marked out for him—and did. But houses, as well as people, can sulk, and one finishes this remarkable book with the impression that not all his daughter's passionate devotion to Bowen's Court has quite sufficed to break the spell of Henry VI's desertion.

One can overdo the pathos apparent in the spectacle of this sensitive, brilliantly intelligent woman, the last of a once-teeming race, writing alone in that remote, half-empty house, while the leaves fall across the rain outside the tall windows. The picture is tempting, and Miss Bowen does a good deal towards evoking it. But the truth, one feels, lies elsewhere—in the fact that the house is still intensely there, that Miss Bowen has no feeble grasp on her property, and that her dependants are bound to her with a link that is the stronger for being far more human than that which binds, say, a factory worker to his employer, Our present social system may be in the act of passing, but the last of it to go will be the landed gentry. Why this is so *Bowen's Court* sets out to show, and with success.

The venture is attended by a great deal of beauty, as well as true seriousness. The latter point is important, for this kind of book is nearly always the rambling hotch-potch of an amateur, while *Bowen's Court* is a real *book*. To criticise the author's interpretation of Anglo-Irish history is outside my competence: no doubt it is sometimes controversial, for objective truth is hard to come by in this instance; but her presentation is certainly most thorough, sane and clear.

The beauty is still more obvious—in the introductory passages descriptive of the place itself, and in the long twilight at the end. Edwardian society had a brassy glitter on which the Anglo-Irish (whether in Ireland or England) turned their backs. Late Victorian manners, together with late Victorian taste in feeling and interior decoration, continued to characterise them down to the present war. So vulgarity, in whatever form, does not enter Miss Bowen's picture; more's the pity, then, that she has seen fit to lace her admirably sober prose with so much modern slang, which strikes a jarring note.

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ALTER EGO

Preludes and Studies. By ALAN DENT. With a prefatory letter by Sir Max Beerbohm. *Macmillan. 12s. 6d.*

The critic who pauses from his daily or weekly task and decides to " collect " himself deserves our sympathetic attention. The first condition of journalism—that it is fatal to look back—has been flouted. He has (let us assume) written well enough for his appearances to be worth noting; we have enjoyed, and may even remember, pieces here and there we should like to read again. But where have the years led, how far does the little more that every good journalist puts into his articles justify reprinting? Too often what was fresh then may appear stale now—perhaps through no fault of the writer; or the impulse that made for readability may survive, but continuity, a point of view, will be lacking. " It's all right but it doesn't add up," is what most of us feel about our once happy *Lundis* and those of others. And the temptation to collect grows less as the material piles higher. Books we *might* have written lie there begun too soon, recklessly pillaged and thrown away, and there's no going back to them. Only the old improvisations can be revived—if they'll stand it.

Preludes and Studies suffers to some extent from this compromise between journalism and literature, from the fact that what succeeds in one spoils for the other. But Mr. Dent has been a wary as well as a skilful journalist. Most of the obvious traps he avoids. He doesn't, for example, set up as an oracle or a public entertainer. He suppresses the phoney personality, lurking behind more flamboyant pens, that threatens to turn the critic into a jack-in-the-box, with a breezy and predictable response on every subject. The ego-mongers (" Do these young poets realise that they are driving me to read Tennyson? " wrote one of them the other day) are Mr. Dent's exact opposite. In other words, he has a subject-matter and respects it, whatever it may be, and that is refreshing.

His book is divided into three sections: " Persons," " Plays," and " Places." The first contains two admirable portraits, those of Paganini and Fuseli, both perfectly suited to Mr. Dent's pen. They attract him by their mixture of talent and unearthliness, they're queer fish, theatrical beings: possibly as the result of being so often in the theatre Mr. Dent has an eye rather for performances than for works of art. The strange performer especially stimulates him. Paganini, Fuseli, give music-hall turns of genius; and just as our admiration goes out to a virtuoso who can play the double-bass while riding a bicycle, so we embrace in Fuseli the odd conjunction of traits—Swiss parentage, lectures at the Royal Academy, friendship with Blake, an eerie set of illustrations to Shakespeare and Milton, a passion for Angelica Kaufmann, pornographic drawings, a very quotable book of art criticism, and madness of the livelier kind. Hazlitt describes him as being like his pictures, " with eye-balls of stone stuck in rims of tin, and muscles twisted together like ropes or wires." Having quoted Hazlitt, Mr. Dent goes on:

> Even in old age he rose at five, winter and summer, and liked a three-hour walk before breakfast. He hated and shunned strangers, enjoyed hearing himself talking, talked to himself, and in company often swore like a trooper. Flaxman once complained to Blake about the Swiss's violent language, and asked how he dealt with it. " What do I do? " said Blake. " Why, I swear back, and he says, astonished 'Vy, Blake, you are svaring,' but he leaves off himself! "

And when interest flags there is always another trick to produce from the bag—at seventy he learnt Dutch to read a book on beetles. Fuseli is a life, though not a name, to conjure with. His status isn't high—a tentative Poe at the most; he might be said to balance that madman from the other end of the century, Christopher Smart. But he is an excellent subject for a not-too-long essay, and Mr. Dent frames him neatly. The other subjects in this section are Boswell, Burns, Mrs. Henry Wood, the Hon. Mrs. Norton (novelist and ballad-writer, and the original of Meredith's Diana), Jane Austen, Massinger, Rachel. Small figures, or larger ones seen from an acute angle, but the modest approach predisposes in favour of a critic who, if anything, underrates himself.

The longest section of the book is a record of five years in the theatre. It is here that the tramlines of journalism show most plainly and that one questions whether Mr. Dent's patience and skill have not been wasted on trifling occasions. These five years (1936–41) are hardly remarkable in the history of the London stage. The triumphs of Mr. Gielgud, revivals of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Chehov, the Habima players, the Comédie Française, Mr. Priestley, a few memorable plays such as *Thunder Rock* or *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the Sadler's Wells ballet—that is the extent of interest. Mr. Dent is more than generous to the period, revels in doing justice to even minor parts, flies away on the wings of theatrical history, backs a non-starter like *The Flashing Stream* and sticks by it, and generally keeps the stage well in the foreground and himself out of sight. It is an act of piety on the part of a rapt and critical first-nighter which one hopes will be rewarded with shining seasons in the future. Personally, while admiring Mr. Dent's technique of appraisal (he manages to tell enough of the plot and to bring in the actors with economical grace), I find these *minutiae* of the past rather tedious. I don't want to be reminded of the title of Miss Dodie Smith's fifth play, and shouldn't dream of " consulting Boaden on Kemble." But then, I have never had a drawer for old programmes.

G. W. STONIER

HAROLD MONRO AND OTHERS.

The Silent Pool. By HAROLD MONRO. *Faber and Faber. 2s. 6d.*

Such was my Singing. By ROBERT NICHOLS. *Collins. 7s. 6d.*

Work in Hand. By ROBERT GRAVES, NORMAN CAMERON, ALAN HODGE. *Hogarth Press. 2s. 6d.*

Poets of To-morrow. Third Selection. *Hogarth Press. 6s.*

Harold Monro was never a happy man. Some itch of irritability and frustration tormented him, in spite of the considerable thing he did for poetry, both as a social figure and as an artist. For he was an artist, and a not unfastidious one. He is sneered at now because he was the kingpin of the " Georgians," whatever that word may mean. He even wrote verses about week-ends in the country. I recollect his telling me once, with amusement, that his verses about milk for the cat had up to date brought him over £150 in anthology fees. But he saw the irony too. Indeed, such things entered too directly into his soul, giving his amusement in this matter, and on most others, a wry twist that could make him almost painful company.

However, he sublimated even that, and in his last few poems he used it as a step to universality, and to work that is likely to survive because of its energy of feeling. Suddenly, out of his fretfulness, odd moods, trivial fancies, breaks this swan-song consisting of less than a half-dozen poems. They are to be found in this selection, and at the beginning of the *Collected Poems* published by Cobden Sanderson in 1933. In the preface to

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he latter book F. S. Flint, his friend and contemporary poet, said "his originality, *in all but his latest work*, is not immediately apparent from any one poem, but . . . the vision is the personal vision of Harold Monro." That is a fair estimate. One of those latest poems ends

> How do they leave who once are in these rooms?
> Some may be found, they say, deeply asleep
> In ruined tombs.
> Some in white beds, with faces round them. Some
> Wander the world, and never find a home.

Monro was one of the last.

Robert Nichols has made his own selection. It t once rouses the speculation why so energetic poet, so volubly conscious of a high purpose, should, after all, have so little work to select from. This book represents the best from some five books, the outcome of twenty-seven years' work. To complicate that speculation, Mr. Nichols has written a long preface in which he refers to several big schemes of poetic work on hand, amongst them one which is already slightly notorious, *Don Juan Tenorio the Great*, begun in 1925 and still on the stocks. His preface is naïvely candid. He admits that his poetry "is like to appear very old-fashioned to young eyes," but this does not worry him, since he believes that "some of my poems contain a certain store of inner energy. I trust that this energy will prove sufficient to carry them, despite a manner which some may find outmoded, into the future." And later, he states that his purpose now is to be a poet of felicity. It is an ambition to which Dante also aspired.

Such seriousness about himself is to be commended, if it is completely unselfconscious. But is it? Can one not detect a slight over-anxiety, a sense of striking an attitude (but in all sincerity)? Further, the reader, however sympathetic, is puzzled by the contradiction between this poet's profession and his achievement. With so conscious a purpose in the grand manner, with so ambitious a scheme of poetic architecture, how is it that in practice Mr. Nichols (and in looking back over early work there is no excuse for this) should be so uncritical of verse that says little, and says it in slovenly, weak numbers? Such a poem as *The Gift of Song*, in which

> A Princess by a casement
> Dreamed, sitting still alone,

is full of such wretched constructions as that I have quoted. And in his latest work there occur too many such passages as

> How she blushes !—one supposes
> She's just waked up from delicate dozes . . .

The preface, with such things in profusion behind it, does not suggest a right self-estimate.

Work in Hand is one of the most interesting books of verse I have read for years. It is the work of a close sodality; one so close indeed that it is difficult to differentiate one poet from the other two. Their outlook and mood are so unified that it may be said of them as a group they they are old Bunyan come to life again. Their emphasis is moral, and therefore the colour of their work is ironic and admonitory. Mr. Graves, whose verse I have enjoyed for a quarter of a century, is, I suspect, the dominant; but the other two have their own personal forms of grim "I told you so." Mr. Cameron is the most central, political and aphoristic of the three. One poem "The Invader" is a most concise summing up of the dilemma with which the German occupant of France must be faced to-day.

> He casts around for some new whim,
> Something preposterously more :
> " Love me," he bids. We offer him
> The slack embraces of a whore.

Mr. Cameron's work is usually dyed with this touch of bitterness. His vintage is in terms of excellent vinegar. There is more fantasy in Mr. Hodge, and this brings him closer to Robert Graves, whose strange vision, expressed in equally odd and original verse modes, returns in this book to his earlier work. Is this to be explained by the following lyric?

> Beyond the Atlas roams a love-beast ;
> The aborigines harry it with darts ;
> Its flesh is esteemed, though of a fishy tang
> Tainting the eater's mouth and lips.
> Ourselves once, wandering in mid-wilderness -
> And by despair drawn to this diet,
> Before the meal was over sat apart
> Loathing each other's carrion company.

The third volume of *Poets of To-morrow* suggests a very dull to-morrow. After reading through it I find that I have no record of enjoyment to hand on, except the contribution by David Gascoyne, a young poet who is moving from an earlier self-consciousness to a true consciousness and deliberation that now give precision to his work. I believe that he will continue to develop, since he gives me the conviction that he has

> So much to tell : so measurelessly more
> Than this poor rusting pen could ever dare
> To try to scratch a hint of . . .

RICHARD CHURCH

A PUGNACIOUS PRELATE

Retrospect of an Unimportant Life. By HERBERT HENSLEY HENSON. *Oxford Press.* 16*s.*

A photograph of Bishop Hensley Henson as he was forty years ago shows the features and expression of a man determined and self-confident to the point of truculence. And despite the urbane modesty of the title given to his agreeably unedifying memoirs, they reveal a profound and inexpugnable pride. His career has been stormy. Not only has he earned the dislike of trade unionists, feminists and total abstainers, but his theological opinions have so much offended his fellow-Anglicans that an attempt was made to prevent his consecration. The combination of theological liberalism with political conservatism is not, it must be said, so odious in his case as in that of Dean Inge. He does not dislike the poor, and his denunciation of the Putumayo atrocities was admirably courageous. The non-Anglican must always be surprised at the skill with which Anglicans decide to perch at one of a hundred positions on the steep slippery slope between the plateau of Roman Catholicism and the plain of agnosticism. Bishop Hensley Henson took up his position rather lower on the slope than any previous bishop. For he asserted the openness of his mind upon two fundamental clauses of the Creed. He was not convinced, one way or the other, about the Virgin Birth or the resurrection of Christ's body. (Why, one may wonder, were these doctrines a greater strain on faith than those of the Atonement or Baptismal Regeneration?) What is odder, he could not admit that the books in which he put forward these opinions were "unorthodox." It is lamentable to see a man of such undoubted intellectual power quibbling thus with words. If he were not an ecclesiastic, he might be accused of disingenuousness, especially as elsewhere he writes: "I *saw* and could not but *own* the historical weakness of the orthodox case." It is fair to add that, unlike a brother Bishop, he does not seem to have persecuted the Anglo-Catholics who so violently opposed him ; and the infidel has not had from him the amusing spectacle of a sceptical prelate refusing to tolerate those who accept the Faith too wholeheartedly.

The present volume ends with 1920, with the Bishop's elevation from Hereford to Durham. Since then his views have changed. Recognising that the majority of his fellow citizens are no longer Christians, he has moved from passionate

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support of the Establishment to the conviction that Disestablishment is desirable. We look forward to his second volume, for he writes clearly, trenchantly and sincerely. He is probably stronger intellectually than any English prelate of his time, and his opinions often have the charm attached to lost causes.

Raymond Mortimer

BALKAN OBSERVER

There's a German Just Behind Me. By Clare Hollingworth. *Secker and Warburg.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

Guest of our Ambassadors in all the Balkan capitals, Miss Hollingworth has the sad task of approving their cooks and deploring their diplomacy. The marriage meats did coldly furnish forth the funeral tables; it was rarely long before the junketings at the Embassies were followed by the cortège to the railway stations. By design as Special Correspondent of the *Daily Express*, Miss Hollingworth was on the spot to cover the death of each Balkan State. Predominantly, she charges the diplomatic corps with failure to understand the chief needs of the Balkan peoples—a market and payment for their produce.

When Dr. Schacht was going up and down South Eastern Europe buying Bulgarian tobacco, Rumanian timber and Jugoslavian barley, he was not only strengthening the German economy but binding the Balkan peasants in gratitude to the Reich. The customer is always right. Mr. Selfridge would certainly have done better than our novices in economic warfare—external economic warfare—who when Schacht was fixing his contracts, were still allowing aircraft spruce, brought from the Pacific coast at some risk, to be shipped from Britain to Caproni in Italy and whose chief essays in pre-emption were the purchase of oil from the British controlled Rumanian wells. But the Balkan peasants remained without a customer until Schacht came to their help. Had we invested a few million pounds in buying up Bulgarian produce at a greater price than Germany, we could have prevented Germany obtaining the economic stranglehold from which she passed to political murder.

Miss Hollingworth damns our political warfare in Greece as emphatically as our economic warfare. The Legation toadied to the wrong people who socially were the "right people," but who unfortunately and irrevocably were pro-German. The pro-Germans of Metaxas' suite put every difficulty in the way of allied collaboration, such as the siting of A.A. units in Salonika before the Nazi invasion. Miss Hollingworth alleges that the British Minister was pusillanimous towards the Metaxas government and could have insisted on the inclusion of Venizelist democrats. Instead of giving the Greeks political inspiration, the British Council gave them culture through the medium of near-undergraduates of small experience and less prestige. Appeasement in diplomacy brought the expected rewards—the oil wells of Rumania a gift intact to the Germans, and the Greek Army of the north surrendered by a Germanophile general.

While the Balkan plums were dropping or being torn into German hands, Miss Hollingworth was moving about with great courage, inspecting the scene and examining the pickers and their fruits. This was the period after the fall of France when a British passport in Southern Europe was a liability rather than an asset. British oil engineers were tortured in Rumanian gaols and only good offices, not threats, could release them at Antonescu's convenience. As an adventure story, apart from its political interest, the book written in a clear-cut, diamond-like style, is well worth reading. To have lived through the Iron Guard rising when in one district alone, fifty Jews, men, women and children, were hung in chains in a Jewish slaughter house and slaughtered "ritually" by Iron Guards in front of a jeering mob makes it seem normal for Miss Hollingworth to have travelled armed with three revolvers. When nightmares become fact, the fantastic becomes rational. Miss Hollingworth vouches for the report of the massacred Jews; she thus corroborates another circumstantial report of the same incident which adds that the corpses were labelled "Kosher."

The unemotional reporting, anecdotes and analyses of this book hold our interest. But it lacks passion. Miss Hollingworth sits at dinner tables or drives her Ford to remote places or listens in the *coulisses* to gossip about politicians' mistresses (there's a lot of that) and everything is woven into the pattern of Balkan history. If you want snob-interest, Miss Hollingworth will give it to you, among other more worthy things. If, on the other hand, you want to know what the Balkan peoples, not merely the manipulators of power, were feeling, Miss Hollingworth won't help you. Her book is strangely weak on Russia's influence in the Balkans. The credit side of the temporising Russo-German pact is represented by the Soviet's active policy in the Baltic; the debit by the Nazi penetration in the Balkans. The Red Army in Riga and the Reichswehr in Varna were occasions as well as omens of war. But there is in the Balkans a strong pro-Soviet feeling which still stops Hitler from making the Bulgarians fight. Miss Hollingworth who admits the label "Left," but seems to know little of Socialism, will at some future time, no doubt, write as fascinating a book about the people of the Balkans as she has about their governors.

Maurice Edelman

Great Angling Stories. Selected and edited by John M. Dickie. *Chambers.* 15*s.*

This volume, which claims to be the first anthology of its kind, is rather exaggeratedly named, for less than two-thirds of the inclusions are "stories" in the true sense of the word, while not more than half-a-dozen merit the description "great." Greatness certainly applies to Gilfrid W. Hartley's "An Old Salmon-poaching Story," which would stand out in any kind of a volume, and perhaps it applies to Henry Williamson's "Black Dog," H. A. Manhood's very atmospheric and splendidly written "The Lake of the Red Trout," and Longfellow's verse-narrative "Hiawatha's Fishing"; but interest, atmosphere, suspense, and skill in the telling rarely in this book manage to produce greatness. Maupassant's "The Swim" gets nowhere near greatness, though as a piece of unpleasant realism with a ripple of sardonic laughter in it (a murder story that is really funny) the tale is hard to beat. Roland Pertwee in "Fish Are Such Liars" (the fish this time, not the anglers), C. R. Green in the anti-feminist "Anglers' Wives," and William Caine in "The Four-pounder," have written three of the best and most amusing; and the "Georgian" poet, Martin Armstrong, tells a disturbing story threaded with pathos, mystery and humanitarian inquiry. But one wonders if Martin Armstrong is much of an angler, for he calls a "rise" a "bite," and makes his angler wade as high as his hips in a quite ordinary trout stream, and even catch more in the late afternoon than the forenoon—a very unusual occurrence. Neither Blackmore nor Andrew Lang are shown at their best; and there is nothing in the book by the late Lord Grey, Arthur Ransome, Morley Roberts, Stephen Gwynn, Cornwallis West, P. B. M. Allan, Sinclair Carr, or T. E. Pryce-Tannatt—all of whom have written good angling books containing narratives of the nature of short stories, or as nearly short stories as many of the inclusions in this anthology—which makes use of Theocritus, Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton, and such things as Patrick Chalmer's description of a day on a moorland stream and Eden Phillpotts' diverting "Paradise Bumble."

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Despite the presence of a number of recent American and Continental writers the general atmosphere of the book is old-fashioned, almost Victorian. Yet setting aside a number of third-rate inclusions, and without regard to the sins of omission, the anthology makes entertaining reading, and should have a wide sale till its place is taken by a more comprehensive volume. HERBERT PALMER

The Sporting Queensberrys. By THE TENTH MARQUESS OF QUEENSBERRY. *Hutchinson.* 15*s*.

Half of this book is given to a history of boxing, and a good deal of the rest to familiar stories about "Old Q." But Lord Queensberry does provide some interesting new material about his grandfather, the eighth marquess, famous alike for the rules he framed and the libel action into which he provoked Oscar Wilde. The author suggests that a fall from a horse may have affected his brain, and the letters from him here published are pretty crooked. One perceives what his younger son, Lord Alfred Douglas, the poet, had to endure. The eldest son died from a shooting accident, which, it is hinted, may not have been an accident. The present Marquess seems to have escaped from the family misfortunes and oddities into good sense and good luck.

Week-end Competitions

No. 651

Set by Audrey Hilton

Competitors are invited to produce a "bread-and-butter" letter of not more than 250 words thanking for a visit to one of the following:—Charles Foster Kane, Lord Sparkenbroke, any Compton-Burnett family, "Mandalay" (from Rebecca), Margot Metroland, a group from a Eugene O'Neill play, Mrs. Alving, La Dame aux Camellias, Mrs. Proudie, or the Duchesse de Guermantes.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, August 3rd.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 648

Set by Raymond Mortimer

The usual prizes are offered for the best English improved versions of the following stanzas:

Adieu, la vapeur siffle, on active le feu;
Dans la nuit le train passe ou c'est l'ancre qu'on lève;
Qu'importe! on vient, on part: le flot soupire: adieu!
Qu'il arrive du large ou qu'il quitte la grève.
Les roses vont éclore, et nous les cueillerons;
Les feuilles du jardin vont tomber une à une.
Adieu! quand nous naissons, adieu! quand nous mourons;
Et comme le bonheur s'envole l'infortune.

Report by Raymond Mortimer

This poem is by Pappadiamantopoul: that is it comes from *Les Stances*, by Jean Moréas. One competitor complained that "anything would be an improvement" (but his knowledge of French was obviously small); another that the poem was too trite to admit of being improved. But many of the best poems are trite in sentiment, and while the expression here is not perfect, I think the series of images well chosen, and the final line memorable. It is all too easy to turn the lines into words suitable for a drawing-room ballad. Towanbucket sent four versions, all good, including:

There was a French bard who said: "Hell!
This life's a perpetual farewell:
  The new-born's first sigh
  Is a sort of good-bye,
And Death's always tolling a bell."

Leslie Johnson made a good attempt in the style of the Rubaiyat; William Bliss, Stanley J. Sharpless, Sir Robert Witt, Emily Chisholm, Betty E. J. Cox, and Willy all sent good versions. J. A. Noonan lost a prize only by a weak final line. The three best versions, in my opinion, come from F. C. C., Ronald Mason and F. M. C. The two last of these seem to have missed the point that birth is a farewell to the happiness of life in the womb, and though I did not ask for a literal version, I think if an image is taken it ought not to be weakened. But Ronald Mason writes excellent Housman, and F. M. C. makes skilful music. I recommend, therefore, that the prizes be equally divided between these three.

Farewell, the whistle wails and the stoked furnace roars;
Clank of the midnight train or the last steamer's bell;
All's one. Life comes and goes. On leaving homely shores
Or fresh from open seas, the waters sigh Farewell.
Roses will flower on the lawn, and we shall pick the roses;
Leaf after finished leaf will fall from the bare tree.
Farewell when we are born, and Farewell as life closes;
Joy fades, but even so fades infelicity. F. C. C.

FAREWELL.

Farewell; the steam gives warning
They bank the furnace high;
The trains go by till morning,
The anchor-winches ply,
And so, good-bye.

I come, I go—who's caring?
Whether from shore or sea
The waves' cry is despairing,
So farewell it must be
For you and me.

The rosebud still uncloses,
Gardens still shed their green,
And we shall pluck the roses
And spring no more is seen
Where spring has been.

There's birth, and farewell after;
There's death—farewell again.
Though there's an end to laughter
There is an end to pain,
And who'll complain? RONALD MASON

TOUT PASSE.

Farewell the whistle blows;
  Over the passing train
Fire in the night-sky glows
  And falls in sparkling rain.
Anchor weighed, the boat
Past the bar will float;
So life comes and goes,
  Passes and comes again.
Farewell, sighs the wave,
Whether it comes to lave
The strand or, ebbing, flows
  Back to the parent main.

Soon as the buds unclose
We shall pluck the rose;
Leaves, when summer's done,
Will fall, one by one.
Farewell, newborn soul!
  Passing soul, farewell!
  When Joy dies the bell
Farewell shall toll.
Joy dies soon, alas;
But Sorrow too will pass,
And the self-same knell
  Toll farewell. F. M. C.

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